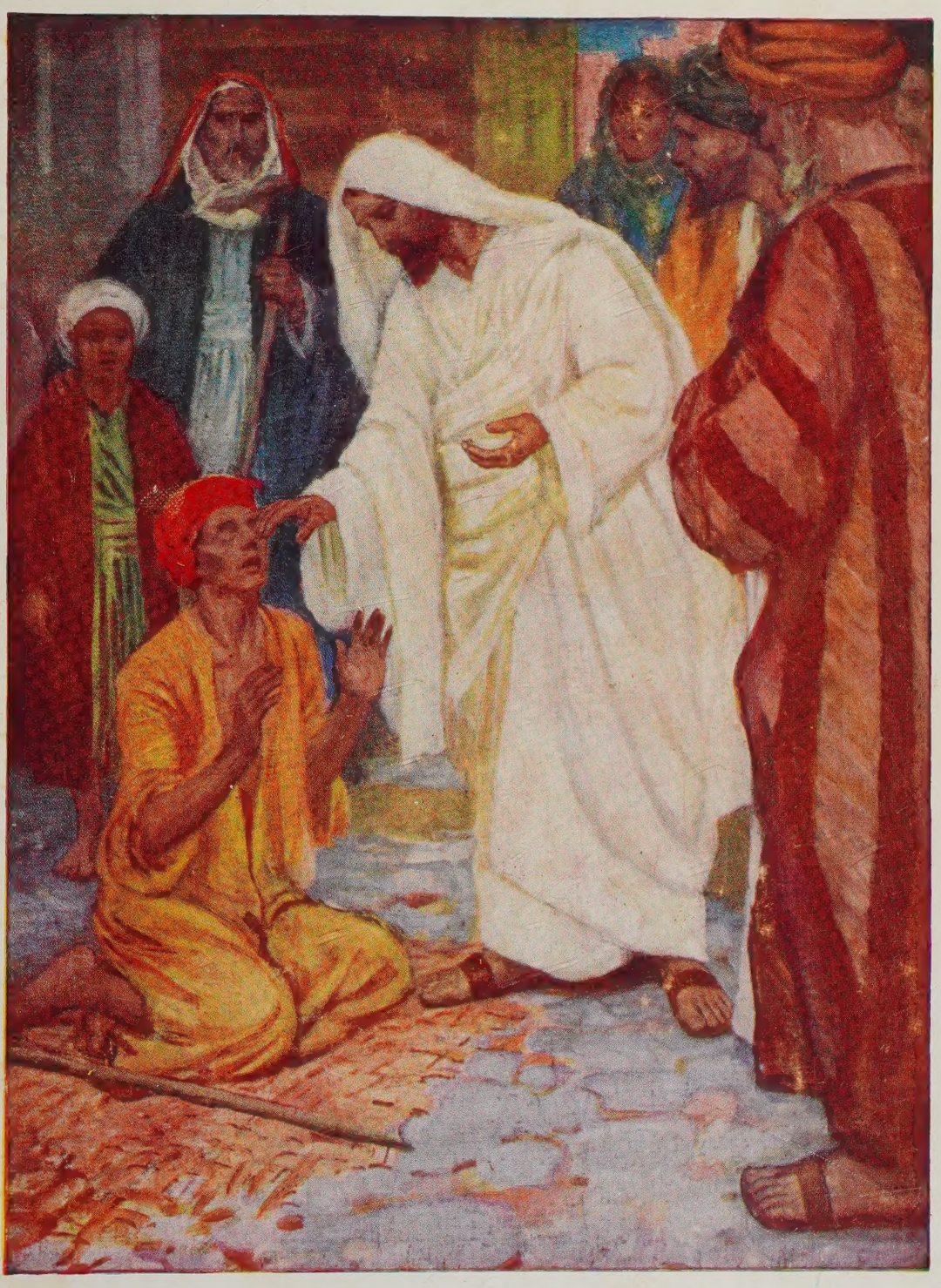
THE BIBLE PICTURE BOOK

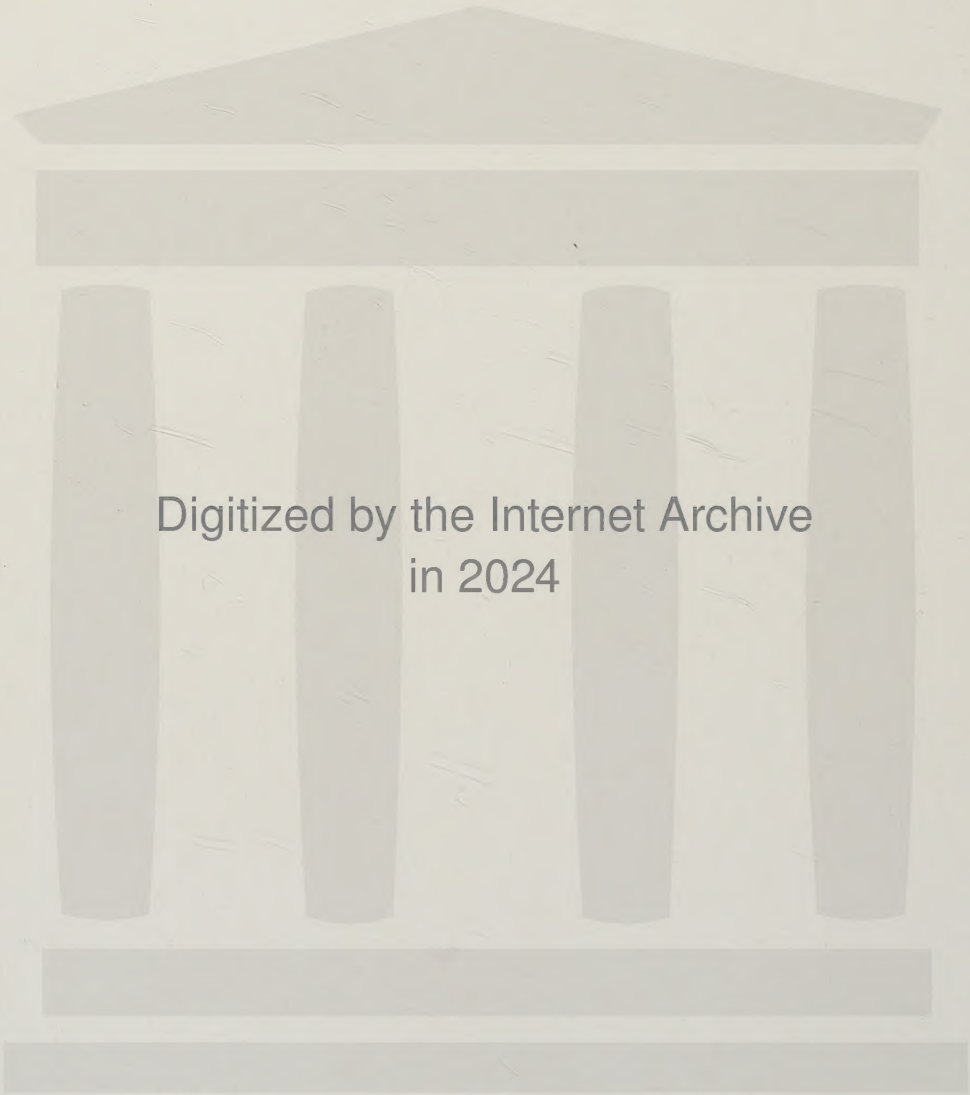


100 LARGE PICTURES IN COLOUR

25/-

1600

THE BIBLE PICTURE BOOK


Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2024

https://archive.org/details/biblepicturebook0000muri

THE BIBLE PICTURE BOOK

BY

MURIEL J. CHALMERS

THOMAS NELSON AND SONS, LTD.
LONDON, EDINBURGH, NEW YORK
TORONTO, AND PARIS

THOMAS NELSON AND SONS LTD
Parkside Works Edinburgh 9
36 Park Street London W1
312 Flinders Street Melbourne C1
302–304 Barclays Bank Building
Commissioner and Kruis Streets
Johannesburg

THOMAS NELSON AND SONS (CANADA) LTD
91–93 Wellington Street West Toronto 1

THOMAS NELSON AND SONS
19 East 47th Street New York 17

SOCIÉTÉ FRANÇAISE D'EDITIONS NELSON
97 rue Monge Paris 5

CONTENTS

1 IN THE BEGINNING—Gen. 3:24
2 NOAH AND THE ARK—Gen. 8:9
3 ABRAHAM LEAVING HOME—Gen. 12:4
4 LOT'S CHOICE—Gen. 13:10
5 HAGAR AND ISHMAEL—Gen. 21:14
6 JACOB OBTAINING THE BLESSING—Gen. 27:27
7 JACOB'S DREAM—Gen. 28:12
8 RACHEL AT THE WELL—Gen. 29:9
9 THE MEETING OF JACOB AND ESAU—Gen. 33:4
10 JOSEPH TELLING HIS DREAM—Gen. 37:5
11 JOSEPH SOLD BY HIS BROTHERS—Gen. 37:28
12 JOSEPH THE RULER—Gen. 41:43
13 JOSEPH AND HIS BROTHERS—Gen. 42:7
14 JACOB AND JOSEPH MEET—Gen. 46:29
15 THE BABE AMONG THE BULRUSHES—Exod. 2:5
16 THE BURNING BUSH—Exod. 3:5
17 THE FIRST PASSOVER—Exod. 12:7
18 THE CROSSING OF THE RED SEA—Exod. 14:27
19 SMITING THE ROCK AT MERIBAH—Exod. 17:6
20 SCOUTS VIEW THE PROMISED LAND—Num. 13:23
21 THE DEATH OF MOSES—Deut. 34:1
22 CROSSING THE JORDAN—Joshua 3:17
23 THE TAKING OF JERICHO—Joshua 6:13
24 THE CALL OF GIDEON—Judges 6:12
25 GIDEON THE DELIVERER—Judges 7:20
26 RUTH AND NAOMI—Ruth 1:16
27 THE CHILD SAMUEL—1 Sam. 3:10
28 SAUL GAINS HIS KINGDOM—1 Sam. 11:11
29 JONATHAN AND HIS ARMOUR-BEARER—1 Sam. 14:13
30 DAVID THE SHEPHERD—1 Sam. 16:11
31 DAVID ANOINTED KING—1 Sam. 16:13
32 DAVID AND GOLIATH—1 Sam. 17:45
33 DAVID AND JONATHAN—1 Sam. 18:3
34 DAVID SPARING SAUL—1 Sam. 26:9
35 DAVID KING OVER ISRAEL—2 Sam. 2:4
36 DAVID BRINGS THE ARK TO JERUSALEM—2 Sam. 6:15; 1 Chron. 15:28
37 SOLOMON DEDICATING THE TEMPLE—1 Kings 8:22; 2 Chron. 6:12

CONTENTS

38 THE QUEEN OF SHEBA VISITS SOLOMON—1 Kings 10:10; 2 Chron. 9:1

39 ELIJAH AND THE RAVENS—1 Kings 17:6

40 NABOTH'S VINEYARD—1 Kings 21:20

41 NAAMAN AND ELISHA—2 Kings 5:15

42 ELISHA'S HEAVENLY DEFENDERS—2 Kings 6:17

43 THE BOY JOASH CROWNED KING—2 Kings 11:12; 2 Chron. 23:11

44 DANIEL IN THE KING'S COURT—Dan. 1:19

45 THE FIERY FURNACE—Dan. 3:25

46 BELSHAZZAR'S FEAST—Dan. 5:17

47 DANIEL IN THE LIONS' DEN—Dan. 6:16

48 THE END OF THE EXILE—Ezra 1:7

49 NEHEMIAH'S PETITION TO THE KING—Neh. 2:5

50 REBUILDING THE WALLS OF JERUSALEM—Neh. 4:18

51 THE ANGEL CHOIR—Luke 2:13

52 THE INFANT JESUS AND THE SHEPHERDS—Luke 2:16

53 THE WISE MEN OF THE EAST—Matt. 2:11

54 THE FLIGHT INTO EGYPT—Matt. 2:14

55 THE BOYHOOD OF JESUS—Luke 2:51

56 THE BOY JESUS IN THE TEMPLE—Luke 2:46

57 JOHN THE BAPTIST—Matt. 3:1; Mark 1:4; Luke 3:3; John 1:6

58 THE MARRIAGE AT CANA—John 2:7

59 A NOBLEMAN SEEKS JESUS—John 4:50

60 AT THE POOL OF BETHESDA—John 5:8

61 IN THE SYNAGOGUE AT CAPERNAUM—Mark 1:21; John 6:27

62 THE WONDERFUL HEALER—Matt. 8:16; Mark 1:32; Luke 4:40

63 A GREAT DRAUGHT OF FISHES—Luke 5:6

64 THE MAN WITH THE FOUR FRIENDS—Mark 2:4; Luke 5:18

65 THE SOWER—Matt. 13:3; Mark 4:3; Luke 8:5

66 JESUS STILLING THE STORM—Matt. 8:26; Mark 4:39; Luke 8:24

67 JAIRUS' DAUGHTER—Matt. 9:25; Mark 5:41; Luke 8:54

68 THE FEEDING OF THE FIVE THOUSAND—Matt. 14:19; Mark 6:41; Luke 9:16; John 6:11

69 JESUS TEACHING HIS DISCIPLES TO PRAY—Luke 11:1

70 JESUS GIVES SIGHT TO THE BLIND—John 9:6

71 THE GOOD SHEPHERD—John 10:11

72 THE GOOD SAMARITAN—Luke 10:34

73 THE TWO SISTERS—Luke 10:42

74 THE UNFRIENDLY NEIGHBOUR—Luke 11:5

75 HEALED ON THE SABBATH DAY—Luke 13:13

76 THE PRODIGAL SON—Luke 15:17

77 THE TEN LEPERS—Luke 17:17

CONTENTS

78 JESUS AND THE CHILDREN—Matt. 19:14; Mark 10:14; Luke 18:16
79 THE GREAT REFUSAL—Matt. 19:21; Mark 10:22; Luke 18:22
80 A FOOLISH RICH MAN—Luke 12:18
81 BLIND BARTIMÆUS—Mark 10:51; Luke 18:41
82 ZACCHÆUS—Luke 19:5
83 MARY AND THE ALABASTER BOX—Matt. 26:7; Mark 14:3; John 12:3
84 JESUS ENTERS JERUSALEM—Matt. 21:9; Mark 11:9; Luke 19:37
85 "THIRSTY, AND YE GAVE ME TO DRINK"—Matt. 25:35; Mark 9:41
86 JESUS WASHING THE DISCIPLES' FEET—John 13:5
87 THE LAST SUPPER—Matt. 26:26; Mark 14:22; Luke 22:19
88 THE BETRAYAL—Matt. 26:49; Mark 14:45; Luke 22:47
89 PETER DENIES HIS MASTER—Matt. 26:75; Mark 14:72; Luke 22:61; John 18:27
90 JESUS BEFORE PILATE—Matt. 27:17; Mark 15:15; Luke 23:25; John 19:5
91 JESUS ON THE CROSS—Matt. 27:50; Mark 15:37; Luke 23:46; John 19:30
92 "HE IS RISEN"—Matt. 28:6; Mark 16:6
93 THE LORD APPEARS TO MARY—Mark 16:9; John 20:16
94 EVENING AT EMMAUS—Mark 16:12; Luke 24:30
95 PETER AND JOHN AT THE GATE BEAUTIFUL—Acts 3:7
96 THE BOLDNESS OF PETER AND JOHN—Acts 4:13
97 PETER DELIVERED FROM PRISON—Acts 12:8
98 PAUL'S ESCAPE FROM DAMASCUS—Acts 9:25
99 PAUL AND SILAS IN PRISON—Acts 16:29
100 PAUL'S VOYAGE TO ROME—Acts 27:35

1. IN THE BEGINNING

LONG, long ago, when Jewish boys and girls used to ask questions about the beginning of the world, they were told this story of a garden. It was not only a story, it was also a great truth that God wished them to learn.

This was what they learnt. Away, away back in the beginning, the Lord God planted a beautiful garden. A river flowed through the garden, making it still more beautiful, and fertile as well. Trees of every kind grew there, each one clothed in its own beauty, bringing forth leaves and blossom and fruit in due season. Flowers grew there, too, in all their wondrous shapes and colours—some tall and pale, others like very balls of flame, some so small and delicate that they were marvels of creation.

Birds flew from tree to tree in this fair garden, their colours bright as the blossoms themselves ; and living creatures, great and small, also dwelt therein. Then God created man, and gave him this garden for his home, that he might tend the trees and flowers, and learn to know the birds and beasts. And then, that man's life might be complete, God created woman to be his companion and helpmeet.

The garden was theirs for their continual pleasure. Of the fruit of every tree in the garden they might eat freely, except the fruit of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil—of that they were not to eat.

Somehow the fruit of that tree seemed very desirable. Moreover Satan, in the form of a serpent, said they ought to taste the fruit, for it would make them as wise as God.

At length temptation grew too strong—they ate of the fruit of that forbidden tree. Then, because they had disobeyed the command of God, they had to leave the fair beauty of that garden, for by their act they now knew sin and the suffering that it causes.

IN THE BEGINNING.

2. NOAH AND THE ARK

MANY years after Adam and Eve there lived a man called Noah. Noah was a good man ; he lived among a people whose hearts were full of evil thoughts, and God revealed to Noah that a great deluge was coming upon the earth. Perhaps at first Noah did not realize that there could be such a flood, but God put it into his mind to build an ark, so that when the floods came it might float upon the waters. Noah's neighbours were greatly amused when they saw him busy making such a boat. He warned them about the flood, but they only laughed the more and thought that he was mad.

At length the Flood came, and Noah and his family took refuge in the Ark, taking with them certain of the birds and beasts of the field. Day after day the Flood increased, and the waters rose until even the highest ground was lost to sight, but the Ark was borne safely on the face of the waters.

At length after many days the great deluge ceased, and the waters rose no more, and the Ark rested on Mount Ararat. After some days Noah sent out a raven, but it did not return. Then Noah sent forth a dove to see if she could find a resting-place upon the earth. But in the evening she returned to the Ark, for the waters still covered the earth. After some days Noah sent forth the dove again, and this time she came back bringing with her an olive leaf plucked from off a tree. Thus Noah knew that the waters had abated, and the trees had appeared once more. A third time Noah sent forth the dove, and this time she did not return to the Ark, for the face of the earth was dry once more.

Then Noah and his family came forth, and built an altar unto God, offering thereon a sacrifice of thanksgiving for their deliverance from the Flood. And God made a covenant with Noah that the flood would not return ; as a sign of this promise a beautiful rainbow appeared in the sky.

NOAH AND THE ARK.

3. ABRAHAM LEAVING HOME

HUNDREDS and hundreds of years ago, in the far-off city of Ur, there lived a man called Abraham. His father was the chief of a great tribe, and Abraham had been trained and educated to succeed him one day as chief. In those days Ur was a great and rich city, with wide and fertile plains on one side, through which wagons loaded with rich merchandise were driven to and from the market-place. On the other side flowed a great river, and into the harbours of Ur came vessels from many lands. But Ur was not only a busy port, it was a city famous for its learning as well, with libraries, schools, colleges, and courts of law.

History tells us that the people of Ur worshipped the Moon-god, and the feast of the New Moon was a festival they did not dare to miss, for they believed their prosperity would grow as the moon grew bigger in the sky.

Abraham, no doubt, would attend this festival in the Temple of the Moon with all his people. We can imagine that one day after he left the temple a priest joined him. They walked in silence for some time, and then the chief's son spoke.

" It is no use, my friend," he was saying. " These many months I have worshipped with you at the New Moon, and always I have come empty away. It is not enough to worship sun and moon and stars ; my heart yearns to know the great Eternal One beyond them all."

" Thither, indeed, I have sought to lead you," said the priest.

" Great has been your patience with me," came the reply, " but now I know it cannot be. To-night the God I have been seeking has spoken to me, and called me forth to unknown ways, I must obey His call, and follow where He leads."

So it was that Abraham and his tribe left the city of Ur with all its wealth and comfort, and set out into the unknown.

ABRAHAM LEAVING HOME.

4. LOT'S CHOICE

IT was toward evening, and the flocks had gathered round the wells. The bleating of sheep and lowing of cattle filled the air; then of a sudden sharp, angry cries arose, breaking the evening calm. Water for the flocks was becoming scarce, and for some nights past there had been a rush for the well, but this night tempers were lost and blows were struck. Neither side would yield, and there by the well the herdsmen of Lot and the herdsmen of Abraham fought till dark.

It was an ugly scene, and Abraham was much distressed. Long into the night he sat and thought; then with the dawn he rose and called Lot, his nephew, from his tent.

"It distresses me," said Abraham, as they climbed to a hilltop near by, "that there should be strife between your herdsmen and mine, as there was by the wells last night."

"The flocks are large," answered Lot, "water is scarce, and the herdsmen are impatient."

"Yes," said Abraham, "but even so, this strife must cease."

The hilltop had now been reached. Abraham's eyes turned to the hills that stretched out to the north and south. They were stern and forbidding, and yet he loved them, for they spoke to him somehow of the Eternal God. Lot also looked around, but his eye was caught by a lovely valley flooded with sunshine. It was green and well watered, and in the fields the corn stood thick and high.

Again Abraham spoke. "It is a good land and wide, my kinsman, yet our flocks are too many to share the same pastures. It is better that we should separate. Choose whither you will go, north or south, east or west, and I shall go the other way."

Lot looked up in surprise. Surely his chief should have first choice, but this was too good a chance to miss. Quickly he replied, "I choose the valley to the east."

"So be it," said Abraham; "my way shall now lie to the west."

So Lot departed to the valley, though in it there dwelt a people noted for their wickedness. Abraham turned to the hills. There God's presence seemed nearer to him than ever before, and the promise rang through his heart, "I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee; and behold this land of Canaan, which thou seest, to thee will I give it and to thy seed for ever."

LOT'S CHOICE.

5. HAGAR AND ISHMAEL

ABRAHAM was growing old now, and in his heart he grieved that Sarah, his wife, had borne him no son, who should inherit not only his wealth but the promises of God.

Often, then, from Sarah's silent tent, Abraham would turn to the tent of Hagar, Sarah's handmaiden, whence came the shouts and merry laughter of Ishmael, their son. He was a fine, strong, healthy boy, and a great favourite with his father, Abraham, the chief; but the sight of him was a grief to Sarah, because she had no son of her own.

Ishmael loved when the tribe was on the move. Then he would ride ahead with the scouts and drive back such enemies as threatened their advance. At other times he would practise with his bow and arrows, training himself to be a perfect marksman. But it was the wide spaces of the desert that Ishmael loved best, where there was freedom and great adventure.

At length a baby boy was born to Sarah and Abraham, and in this child, Isaac, they had their hearts' desire.

Still jealousy smouldered in Sarah's heart. Ishmael seemed so strong and sturdy beside her little baby; perhaps even yet Abraham would make this lad his heir, for he admired him so much.

One day, when Isaac was about three years old, a feast was held throughout the camp. Sarah saw Ishmael playing with her son Isaac, and in a moment her fierce anger blazed forth. No longer would she be tormented by the sight of this boy in the camp. So, calling Abraham, she commanded him to send away Hagar and Ishmael. Let them go anywhere so long as she never saw them again.

Abraham was grieved at the cruel words of Sarah, but he knew that unless he gave in there would be no peace in the camp.

Early next morning he called Hagar and Ishmael, and leading them a little way beyond the tents, he told them with great sorrow that he must send them away. "Fear not," he said, as he gave them food and water for the journey, "for God will watch over you, and Ishmael shall be the founder of a great desert tribe."

The words of Abraham came true, for in the desert when water could not be found and Hagar feared that Ishmael would die of thirst, God led them to a well of water. God indeed was their defence and shield, and Ishmael grew up to be a great warrior.

HAGAR AND ISHMAEL.

6. JACOB OBTAINING THE BLESSING

ABRAHAM, the brave old chief, was dead, and Isaac, his son, had been the leader of the tribe for many years.

To Isaac and Rebekah, his wife, were born twin sons—the elder was called Esau, and his brother, Jacob. Twins as they were, these two boys were as different as they could be in every way. Esau was strong and vigorous, and became a clever hunter, while Jacob was quiet and thoughtful, and occupied himself at home amongst the herds and in the fields.

Jacob used to hear his father speak of a sacred promise which had come to him from Abraham. Something mysterious about this promise fascinated Jacob, and the thought of it ever filled his mind. By right the promise belonged to Esau, but he cared nothing for such things, so Jacob went on thinking and planning as to how he could wrest from Esau the right of the eldest son.

At length his chance came, and quickly he seized upon it. Exhausted by hunting, and utterly famished by hunger, Esau staggered one night into the tent of Jacob. All he wanted was food to save his life. Seeing how desperate Esau was, Jacob struck a bargain with him, and for a dish of lentils he received in exchange the birthright he coveted.

Only one thing now was needed—the blessing of Isaac the chief. He was an old man now, he could not live much longer, and his eyes were dim.

" Go," he said one day to Esau, " bring me some venison, that I may eat of it, and give you my blessing ere I die."

Now Rebekah desired that the blessing should be given to Jacob, so she set to work on a plan to deceive Isaac. She prepared some goat's flesh in place of venison. Then she clothed Jacob in Esau's garments, and putting some goat's skin on his hands and neck—for Esau was a hairy man—she sent him into Isaac's tent to pose as Esau and obtain the blessing.

Though doubtful at first, the old man was at length deceived, and raised his hands to call down upon Jacob the blessing due to his firstborn.

Soon afterwards Esau returned, and then it was discovered how he had been cheated and Isaac deceived. Wealth and power had been given to Jacob ; to Esau remained toil and struggle. So Esau hated Jacob for the blessing he had stolen, and in his fury he vowed that he would slay him.

JACOB OBTAINING THE BLESSING.

7. JACOB'S DREAM

THE news of Esau's wrath spread through the camp, and all that night Jacob had to lie in hiding. Very early next morning, while it was still dark, two figures crept out from the camp, and there Rebekah bade farewell to Jacob, speeding him on his way to Haran, the land of her own people, where he would be safe from Esau's anger.

A long, rough road lay before him, for he must keep to the hills, not daring to take the main trade route lest Esau should come in pursuit. Never a strong man, and always a lover of the shelter of the tents, Jacob found nothing of adventure in his flight, only great loneliness, and not a little fear.

All day he went on his way, but now, as the sun set and night drew on, no dwelling of any kind was to be seen. He hurried on, straining his eyes to catch a glimpse of some shelter for the night; but darkness found him in a narrow gorge, with hills towering high on either side.

To-night a stone must be his pillow, so choosing one on which to rest his head, he wrapped himself in his cloak and lay down to sleep. As he slept he dreamed. In his dream he saw a great stairway rising from the valley where he lay. Higher and higher it mounted, until the top of it was lost in heaven itself. Up and down the stairway moved shining angels, the messengers of God.

Then it seemed that God Himself stood beside Jacob, and spoke to him, renewing that sacred promise made to Abraham and Isaac: "Behold the land whereon thou liest, to thee will I give it and to thy seed: and in thee, and in thy seed, shall all the families of the earth be blessed."

Jacob would stir in his sleep as these wondrous words echoed in his heart. Then the voice spoke again, in these words of comfort and of grace, "Behold, I am with thee, and will keep thee in all places whither thou goest. I will never leave thee."

Jacob awoke full of awe, for in that place he had found God. "This is God's house," he said; and ere he set forth again, he vowed that from that day he would try to live not for himself, but for the Lord his God.

JACOB'S DREAM.

8. RACHEL AT THE WELL

FOR many days Jacob went on his way farther and farther to the north. But now he was not lonely and afraid as he had been before, for the memory of his dream was still with him, and he knew that God would go with him and protect him everywhere he went.

He liked to think of that first night he had spent away from home. He called the place Bethel, which means the House of God. It was a very sacred place to him, for there he had learned that God was very near, and that He had a purpose which He wished Jacob to fulfil.

At length, one day, he drew near to a well which stood in a great wide field. It was noontide, so Jacob was surprised to see a company of shepherds and their flocks gathered round the well, not watering their sheep, but simply sitting waiting.

" Whence come ye, brethren ? " Jacob asked of them.

" From Haran do we come," they answered.

" Haran ! " cried Jacob. " Then is my journey at an end, for to Haran I was bound. Know you a man called Laban who lives there ? "

" Yes, sir," they answered. " We know him well ; he is a man of substance in the land."

" Why do you wait here by the well ? " he questioned further. " It were better to water your sheep and lead them forth again."

" The stone that covers the well is heavy, sir," they answered, " so it is our custom to gather here and water all the flocks at once. See, here comes Rachel, the daughter of Laban. She leads her father's sheep to water."

As the shepherdess drew near, Jacob saw that she was very beautiful. Something about her roused in him those high resolves he had made at Bethel. So with a courtesy which was new to him, who had until now striven only for himself, he put forth all his strength, and pushing the stone from the mouth of the well, he himself watered Rachel's flock.

When he told her who he was, Rachel ran to tell her father Laban, and Jacob was welcomed into his uncle's home. He was a skilful shepherd, and Laban wished to keep him. " Tell me," he said to Jacob, " what shall your wages be ? " Quickly Jacob gave his answer, " Seven years will I serve you for Rachel, your daughter." And these seven years seemed unto him but a few days for the love he had for her.

RACHEL AT THE WELL.

9. THE MEETING OF JACOB AND ESAU

FOR twenty years Jacob had served his uncle Laban. He had faced hardship and danger for his flocks, and he had tasted the bitterness of being deceived, but he had known also the joy of Rachel's love, and had felt the power she had of calling out the highest that was in him.

He had left his home a fugitive, with only his staff in his hand; now he is on his return journey with flocks and herds, men-servants and women-servants, wives and children. As he draws near to his old home, memories come flooding in upon him. He knows now how cruelly he wronged his brother Esau; he sees how mean and selfish he has been, and how little he has deserved the prosperity that has come to him. But he is a finer man now, and, as he halts by the brook Jabbok, where it rushes down into the river Jordan, he determines that Esau must be told of his return, no matter how he might choose to avenge the wrongs done him so long ago.

A message is sent to " my lord Esau," praying that " his servant Jacob " may find favour in his eyes. The messengers return with the news that Esau is approaching with four hundred fighting men.

Terror seizes Jacob, but it is not for himself he cares. At the worst he can meet Esau face to face, but he fears for all the young and the defenceless folk that are now in his charge.

If only Esau might be appeased, is his first thought; so, summoning his herdsmen, he sends a lavish present to " my lord Esau." Drove after drove would meet him on his way—sheep and goats, cattle and oxen, camels and asses.

Then hurrying the women and children out of danger, Jacob crossed the brook by himself. During the night he felt he had received God's blessing. Morning found him calm and strong, for in the silence and darkness of the night he had faced and conquered all his fear.

Soon Esau and his company came in sight. As Jacob went to meet his brother, he bowed himself to the ground seven times—such was the greeting due to a prince. Esau could not understand. He had forgiven and forgotten all the past, he bore no grudge against his brother Jacob, and runs now with outstretched arms to fold him in a warm and brotherly embrace.

THE MEETING OF JACOB AND ESAU.

10. JOSEPH TELLING HIS DREAM

BY the door of the chief's tent in the midst of the encampment on the slopes of Hebron, Jacob stood for a little in the morning sunshine, and then moved forward through the tents, leaning on the arm of a tall, handsome youth. This is Joseph, Rachel's son. He has all the charm of his mother, and Jacob loves him best of all his sons, for he is upright and true.

Now come Joseph's brethren to lead the flocks to pasture. They are strong and hardy, but they are not pleasant men. The faces of some tell of bitter thoughts, while others look as if they could not be trusted to play straight, and have many crooked ways to hide.

As they pass out, clad in their rough shepherds' cloaks, they look with anger on Joseph's beautiful embroidered coat—his father's gift. " Not much work expected of *him*," they grunt as they go past. Joseph did take his share in the work of the camp, but nothing could remove the jealousy which his brothers felt against him. They came to hate him so much that they could not speak civilly to him.

One night Joseph dreamed a dream, and next day as he companied with his brothers he told them of it.

" Let me tell you of a dream I had last night," he said. Grudgingly his brothers listened as Joseph continued, " I dreamt we were in the harvest-field, binding sheaves, when all at once my sheaf arose and stood upright, while all your sheaves stood round and bowed themselves before my sheaf."

" A fine dream indeed," his brothers sneered. " No doubt you expect some day to be made ruler over us," and their hatred against Joseph grew stronger and stronger.

Not long after Joseph dreamed again. Once more he told his brothers of his dream, and Jacob came to hear of it as well. " I thought I was standing under the wide open heavens," said Joseph. " The sun was sinking in glory in the west, then appeared the silver moon, and the stars came out one by one. Then behold, in my dream, sun and moon and eleven stars bowed before me where I stood. I wonder what could be the meaning of such a lovely dream."

His brothers said little, but their feelings against him grew more cruel and more bitter, and even Jacob began to be uneasy about Joseph's dreams of greatness.

JOSEPH TELLING HIS DREAM.

11. JOSEPH SOLD BY HIS BROTHERS

THE hill-slopes round Hebron were deserted, for Jacob's ten shepherd sons had led their flocks to Shechem, forty miles away, in search of better pasture. The old chief was anxious, for no news of their safety had reached him, and he knew how quarrelsome and violent they could be.

At length he determined to send Joseph to see how they fared, and bring him word again.

Joseph reached Shechem in safety. From the hilltop he scanned the whole valley, but nowhere could he see any sign of his brothers' flocks or tents. From hill to hill he ran, but still he could not see them. Then he was told that they had moved to Dothan, fifteen miles farther on. There at length he saw them in the valley, and quickly ran towards them.

His brothers saw him coming, but they gave no sign of welcome. Instead, their faces darkened with ugly hate, and wickedly they conspired together. "Here comes this dreamer," they said to one another. "Let us slay him and cast him into a pit, then we shall see what will become of his dreams of greatness." But the advice of Reuben, the eldest brother, prevailed. "Let us not kill him," he said, "but simply cast him into this pit here near at hand." Reuben's plan was to help him to escape when darkness fell.

When Joseph arrived, rough hands were laid upon him, his beautiful coat was torn off, and in spite of all his cries and struggles he was thrown into the pit.

For one moment he caught a glimpse of the faces of his brothers full of deadly hatred; then the great stone was placed over the mouth of the pit. There in the darkness Joseph was left alone, possessed by fear and anger, misery and despair.

Then after some time the stone was lifted off again. "Ah," thought Joseph, "they have relented after all. Perhaps they did this just to frighten me." But when he was drawn up to the top he found there a great crowd of strange men —merchants, they seemed, on their way to Egypt, for there were the camels laden with goods and the men armed for protection.

Above all the noise Joseph heard the sound of money being counted out; then his hands were bound and he was led away a captive. The son of Jacob thus became a slave, but the God of Jacob was watching over him.

JOSEPH SOLD BY HIS BROTHERS.

12. JOSEPH THE RULER

STRAPPED to a camel's back, Joseph was carried off to Egypt, and there in the market-place of a great city he was sold as a slave to one called Potiphar, a high official of Pharaoh's court. Before very long misfortune befell Joseph once more, and although he was innocent he was thrown into prison, where he remained for a long time. Still he did not become bitter or impatient, for he knew that even in prison God was with him.

One day the streets of the royal city were all decked with flags, for it was Pharaoh's birthday; but within the palace all was gloom. The sacred scribes and magicians had been called that they might read the riddle of a dream that had come to Pharaoh overnight, but they had failed; and so, haunted by a dread of threatened disaster, the king sat baffled and distraught.

"Is there no one in all the land of Egypt who can interpret dreams?" he cried.

"Sir, in prison there lies a Hebrew slave, and he is skilled in reading dreams," one of his servants ventured to reply.

"Let him be brought at once," commanded Pharaoh, driven desperate by anxiety.

So from his gloomy dungeon Joseph is brought into the magnificent palace of the king. Quickly Pharaoh tells his dream, begging Joseph to explain its meaning.

"The answer is from God," said Joseph, "not from me; for behold God hath revealed unto Pharaoh what He is about to do. For seven years there will be great plenty throughout the land of Egypt, and then will follow seven years of famine; the famine will be great, and will consume the land. Let Pharaoh, therefore, look out a man discreet and wise, and set him over the land of Egypt, that granaries may be built, and corn stored therein against the years of famine."

Pharaoh looked upon Joseph, full of the wisdom of God. Here was the man that could save Egypt at this hour, he thought, so he appointed Joseph his Prime Minister, second only to himself—ruler over the whole land of Egypt. Pharaoh's ring is put upon his hand, and a kingly chain about his neck. A great procession is arranged. Arrayed in royal robes, Joseph rides in a chariot, second only in splendour to Pharaoh's own, while slaves run before, commanding all to bow the knee to him whom Pharaoh has appointed Governor of Egypt.

JOSEPH THE RULER.

13. JOSEPH AND HIS BROTHERS

AS Governor of Egypt, Joseph lived in a great palace, almost as fine as that of Pharaoh, and yet he was the busiest man in all the land.

Year after year great harvests were reaped, but a time came when the Nile did not flow over the land, and at harvest-time the fields were parched and bare. Soon the private stores of grain were exhausted, and people felt the pinch of want. Then Joseph's great storehouses were opened, and corn was sold to all who came.

In Canaan, too, the rains had failed, and the country was faced with starvation. " I have good news for you," cried Jacob one night to his sons. " The merchants tell me there is corn in Egypt, so get you down there and buy. Take your asses with you and bring back as much corn as they can carry, that we may eat and live."

If there was one place these brothers dreaded, it was the land of Egypt. But the need was great, and they could not refuse to go. Only Benjamin, the youngest son, remained at home, for he was the apple of his father's eye.

At length these roughly-clad shepherds arrive amidst the great cities of Egypt, with their magnificent temples and towering palaces. Amazed at the wonder of it all, they make their way into the presence of the great ruler. Very humbly they bow themselves to the ground before him, as they answer the questions put to them by his interpreter.

Joseph has recognized them at once, but they do not know him ; so, to test them, he pretends to be angry and to find fault with them.

" Ye are spies," he says, " come to find out the weak points in our defence." Again and again they assure him of their honesty, but he will not believe their word. Suddenly they find themselves seized, and borne off to prison. There they remember their cruelty long ago to their brother Joseph.

After three days they are released, and sent back to Canaan with their sacks full of corn. Simeon, however, is kept behind to make sure that they will come again and bring their youngest brother with them.

A strange tale indeed they tell Jacob when they return, for, in spite of the governor's harshness, each one has found his money restored to him, lying in the mouth of his sack.

JOSEPH AND HIS BROTHERS.

14. JACOB AND JOSEPH MEET

ANOTHER year had passed, and still the famine was sore upon the land. Once more the sons of Jacob must go and face that dread Governor of Egypt, that they might buy more corn and live. And this time Benjamin must go with them.

His heart full of anxiety, Jacob watched his sons until they disappeared, and then returned to his lonely tent. Day after day he waited and watched, his thoughts ever with his sons, wondering how the governor would treat them this time. "Only let Benjamin return in safety," was his prayer.

At length, when he was almost worn out with watching, he saw travellers approaching from the south. Peering into the distance, he knew them to be his sons. Anxiously he counted them. There were eleven—God be praised! Then, suddenly weary, he went back slowly to his tent, to await their arrival.

There he greeted them all with gladness, but specially young Benjamin. "Why have you been so long, my sons?" he asked. But he could make nothing of their replies. Greatly excited, they are all trying to tell him about something that has happened; but he cannot understand. "Joseph, Joseph," is all he seems to hear.

"What is this you tell me about Joseph?" he asks in a voice trembling with tears.

"Joseph is alive," they cry. "He is governor of all the land of Egypt."

"Nay," said the old man, "ye mock me. 'Tis a cruel jest. Long since ye brought to me his coat all stained with blood. It cannot be."

"Yes, yes, indeed 'tis true," they cry again. "Look yonder. See the asses and wagons we have brought from Egypt. They are laden with presents which Joseph sends to you, and he and the great Pharaoh beg of you to arise and come and dwell in the land of Egypt."

At last Jacob believes. "It is enough," he says. "I will go and see Joseph ere I die."

Arrived in Egypt, great honour is shown to them for Joseph's sake, and he himself comes in his chariot to meet them.

A strange figure did this great ruler seem to Jacob—clothed in Egyptian garments, and wearing the head-dress of Egypt. But he was Joseph—and at last father and son met in a long embrace. Jacob is content now, for the deep sorrow of his heart had been turned into joy.

JACOB AND JOSEPH MEET.

15. THE BABE AMONG THE BULRUSHES

JOSEPH was no longer remembered in the land of Egypt, and his people had been made slaves. They lived in dark mud huts and toiled for the new Pharaoh under the lash of taskmasters in his brickfields, or in the building of great palaces, fortresses, and temples. Then came his most terrible decree—" Every son that is born amongst the people of Israel shall be cast into the river."

Not long after, in one of the slave huts, was born a lovely baby boy. His father and mother loved him so much that they simply could not obey the command of Pharaoh, so the birth of that baby boy was kept a great secret. Three months passed, and now it was more difficult to keep the secret. Any day by his crying he might attract the attention of Pharaoh's officers, and then disaster would fall on all the family. Something would have to be done.

One night in that hut a breathless silence reigned. The door was well guarded, while the mother's fingers darted to and fro weaving reeds into a cradle. When it was finished and made water-tight, she placed in it her baby boy. Very early next morning that precious cradle was taken and floated amongst the bulrushes which grew beside a very beautiful part of the river. It was the pool where Pharaoh's daughter and her maidens used to come to bathe.

Near by hovered Miriam, the baby's sister, watching anxiously to see what would happen. Soon the princess came, and when she saw the cradle she had it brought and opened. There, to her surprise, she found a little baby. She saw how lovely he was, and when he cried her heart was touched with pity—pity for the baby and for the mother that had tried to save his life. Seeing the kind look on the face of the princess, Miriam hurried forward and offered to find a nurse for the child. Of course, she ran and brought her mother, who was not far away.

" Take this child and nurse him for me," the princess said. " When he is older he shall come to the palace and shall be as my son. He shall be called Moses, for I drew him from the water." So, hugging her darling child close, that mother bore him home, afraid no longer because her child was safe.

THE BABE AMONG THE BULRUSHES.

16. THE BURNING BUSH

MOSES, born of Hebrew slaves, had been brought up in the royal palace as a son of Pharaoh's daughter. All the wisdom and the learning of Egypt were his, for he had been educated as a prince.

As he grew up Moses began to realize that much of the splendour of Egypt was due to the toil wrung out of Hebrew slaves. Watching them one day in the brick-fields, he saw what they had to suffer. Suddenly he felt their sorrows were his own, and in a blaze of anger he slew one of the taskmasters. His rash deed had done no good, for now Pharaoh sought his life, and he had to flee the country. He left Egypt far behind, and found safety in the desert.

Many months passed, and Moses, with all his wisdom and his learning, was now tending sheep in the land of Midian. All around the stillness was unbroken, but the mind of Moses knew no rest, for he was haunted by the thought of the slavery of his people.

One day, as he tended his sheep, Moses saw a bush all clothed in flame. "It will die out soon," he thought, "and leave but charred remains;" but no—he looked again, and still it burned and burned.

Drawing nearer, he stood and looked upon it. This was no ordinary flame, for the bush was not consumed. Here was a beacon, lit by God, to call him into His nearer presence.

Then he heard a voice telling him to put his shoes from off his feet, as the place was holy ground. Moses knelt there, hiding his face from the glory of the flame. "Moses, Moses," the voice continued, "I have seen the affliction of my people which are in Egypt, and I have heard their cry. Behold, it is My will that they be delivered from bondage and led into a goodly land. Now, therefore, I shall send *thee* unto Pharaoh, that *thou* mayest bring forth my people out of Egypt."

Thus was Moses laid hold of by the great hand of God. His commission would lead him into many difficulties and dangers, but always in the after years, when his courage failed and his heart was weary, he would think of the bush that went on burning, for so too must his life be spent in God's service.

THE BURNING BUSH.

17. THE FIRST PASSOVER

MOSES made his way back to Egypt to undertake the great task of winning the freedom of his people. He knew it would be a difficult task, but it proved so much more difficult than even he expected, that many a time he was driven to despair, and then he remembered the bush that went on burning.

After God had sent many plagues upon Egypt, it seemed at length that the end of the long struggle for freedom was in sight. Moses called together the "elders," and issued orders to all the people. On a certain day each family must choose a lamb to offer in sacrifice to God. Four days later, behind fast closed doors, the sacrifice was prepared. The lamb was killed, and some of the blood was caught in a vessel, into which the head of the house dipped a bunch of hyssop. Then he went out and marked with blood the cross-piece and the side-posts of the door. What could be the meaning of these strange secret signs ?

Late as it is, the lamb is roasted for the feast, and bread is baked without leaven, for there is no time to wait for it to rise. Meanwhile the things which they treasure most are being packed, ready to lift at a moment's notice, and all the members of the family, shod as for a journey, stand prepared to eat this feast.

Then the eldest in the house explains. "This is no ordinary feast," he says, "but the feast of our deliverance. Our doors have been shut this night and marked with blood for our protection, for even now a deadly pestilence is sweeping through the land. In every house, except those marked with blood, the eldest son will die. These only shall the pestilence pass over. In haste, therefore, let us eat our feast and be ready, for to-night we shall be sent forth free."

In the night a great cry arose—the pestilence had done its work, and the stricken people turned to Pharaoh.

"Send forth the children of Israel out of the land," he commanded. "Let them take their flocks and herds and be gone." So the slaves were free at last.

This night of deliverance they could never forget. Year after year, therefore, they observed this feast of the Passover, remembering the mercy and goodness of God who delivered them from bondage and from death.

THE FIRST PASSOVER.

18. THE CROSSING OF THE RED SEA

FOR two days the freed slaves had been on the march, and now, having passed the last watch-tower between Egypt and the desert, they entered at night into a sandy region, a narrow strip between Migdol and the sea. There they encamped, sheltered by hills behind, while before them lay a wide expanse of water, with the desert far beyond.

All night a great gale blew—the flapping and the creaking of the tents, together with the bleating of sheep and the lowing of cattle, buffeted by the wind and distressed by the clouds of whirling sand, drowned even the sound of the thundering waters which lay beyond the Sea of Reeds.

With the dawn a fresh sound fell upon their ears, and with it terror leapt into their hearts—for it was the rumble of the chariots and horsemen of Egypt ! Despair and panic seized the multitude. Here they were trapped between the mountains and the sea. There was no escape. They would be crushed and trampled by the horses and chariots of Pharaoh.

In their fear and fury they turned on Moses, for it was he who had led them forth. " Were there no graves in Egypt," they cried, " that you have brought us to the wilderness to die ? Why did you not leave us alone ? Rather had we been slaves in Egypt than betrayed thus in the wilderness ! "

Moses, too, saw the dreadful danger they were in, but he fought down his panic and held on firmly to his faith in God. " Fear not," he said to the people, " but stand still and see the salvation of the Lord." Almost as he spoke a cloud of darkness arose and shut the hosts of Egypt from their sight.

Moses turned, and there, where had been the Sea of Reeds, there was no water, but a great bank of sand ; for the water had been blown back by a strong east wind. " Behold," cried Moses, pointing with his rod, " the Lord hath made plain our way before us." So in great haste, struggling in the teeth of the wind, that great multitude made their crossing on dry land.

Scarcely were they safe on the other side, when the great volume of pent-up waters returned with a crash, and destroyed the hosts of Egypt as they followed in pursuit.

Here was a great deliverance indeed ! Even the dullest and bitterest of the slaves saw here the hand of God. At last it seemed they realized the thrill of God's guidance, and singing His praises loud and long, with hearts all aglow, they set out towards the wilderness with light and eager steps.

THE CROSSING OF THE RED SEA.

19. SMITING THE ROCK AT MERIBAH

WITH the destruction of the hosts of Egypt, the people of Israel felt that now their freedom was assured, and Moses hoped that the joy they had shown at their deliverance would lead to a firmer faith in God and in His goodness.

So they moved on towards the south, a great cavalcade of men, women, children, cattle, sheep, and goats. The life of the desert was very different from the life they had led hitherto. They had lived in cities where there was always plenty of stir; here in the silence they seemed shut off from all the world. As slaves they had worked for masters, who, although cruel and stern, had seen that they were housed and fed; but here in the desert they had to do everything for themselves. The life of freedom was a fine life, no doubt, but it was not easy; so before long the lightness went out of their step, and they became sulky and discontented once more.

Such a large company needed a great deal of water for themselves and for their flocks, so night after night a halt was made near springs, and each morning the water-skins were filled before they went on to their next halting-place. Sometimes the red glare of the sands was broken by a shimmer of green, and then they hurried forward to the shade and refreshment of an oasis.

Slowly they moved on until they came to great towering mountains that rose bare and terrifying on every side. In spite of all God's care, still they dreaded hunger and starvation. As they drew near to Rephidim, one of their fears came true—there was no water, and in the blazing heat of the sun they were racked with the agony of thirst. Angry and threatening, they gathered round Moses. "Where are all your promises of deliverance now?" they asked him. "You have brought us here to torture us to death. We were better far as slaves in the brickfields of Egypt."

In his despair Moses prayed to God, and once again God showed him what to do. Hidden in Mount Horeb was a spring, which, if set free, would gush forth. Thither Moses led the people; he struck the rock, and a great cataract of water poured forth, from which all might drink and live.

SMITING THE ROCK AT MERIBAH.

20. SCOUTS VIEW THE PROMISED LAND

AT length, after many adventures, Moses and his people arrived at Kadesh, on the very borders of the Promised Land.

The country was unknown to them, so scouts must be sent forward to find out all they could. One scout was chosen from each tribe, and Joshua was put in command. " Go up," said Moses, " and see what kind of a land it is—whether it is fertile and well-wooded, or poor and bare. Notice whether the people seem strong or weak, and see what kind of cities they live in."

From the heights of Hebron the scouts viewed the Promised Land. It was a fair sight : trees clothed the mountain-sides, the valleys looked rich and prosperous, and there was pasture land for many flocks. The cities were well built and strongly fortified, and the people looked vigorous and strong.

As Joshua looked upon the land his heart leapt for joy. Eagerly he turned to the other scouts, but in the eyes of Caleb only there was an answering look. The others were gloomy and sullen. " Come," said Joshua, " let us take some of the fruits to show the people and rejoice their hearts." So they gathered figs, pomegranates, and grapes, and made their way back to the camp.

On their return the people swarmed round them. " Tell us something of the land," they cried. Caleb spoke up bravely. " It is a wondrous land," he said, " truly flowing with milk and honey. It took two of us to carry back these grapes ! The cities are well built. The men are big and strong, yet with God's help we shall prevail."

Already there was murmuring. The people did not like this talk of strong cities and big men, but Caleb went on. " Come, let us go up," he cried ; " we are well able to win this land."

Thrusting Caleb aside, another of the scouts stood forth before the people. " It is a goodly land," he cried, " but we are not able to go against these people ; they are too strong for us. I tell you there are giants in that land, beneath whose feet we should be crushed like very grasshoppers."

Believing the worst, the people turned once more in fury against Moses. Though they were free, they still had coward hearts, and were not fit as yet to win the land which God had promised should be theirs.

SCOUTS VIEW THE PROMISED LAND.

21. THE DEATH OF MOSES

TURNED back from the very threshold of the Promised Land by their own cowardice, the children of Israel had to dwell for forty years in the desert. During that time a new generation arose—people who knew nothing of bondage and slavery, who had lived in the keen bracing air of the desert, and had known freedom all their days. In such people there was bravery and adventure enough to carry out the purposes of God.

The work of Moses was now wellnigh over. He saw that fighting lay ahead. He was too old for soldiering, so calling all the people together he commended to them their new leader, Joshua. It was a heavy burden he had to lay on the shoulders of so young a man, but Moses did so with confidence, for Joshua did not bear it all alone.

" Be strong and of a good courage," Moses said to the new leader, " for thou must go with this people into the land which the Lord hath promised to their fathers : thou shalt lead them into their inheritance. And the Lord, He it is that doth go before thee ; He will be with thee, He will not fail thee, neither forsake thee : fear not, neither be dismayed." How strong and firm was the faith of Moses ! Joshua knew it to be the secret of his strength.

Solemn moments followed as Moses raised his hands in blessing on all that multitude of people. For every tribe he prayed, beseeching them to follow the ways of God. " Love the Lord your God," he pleaded. " Obey His voice, and cleave unto Him, for He alone is Life. The Eternal God is your refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms."

Then Moses left the people and turned towards the height of Pisgah. They watched him climb higher and higher until he was lost to sight. On the mountain-top a wonderful view rolled out before his gaze. His eyes followed the valley of the Jordan to the north, until the snow-capped peaks of Hermon came in sight. To the west the hills and valleys spread out before him, while beyond, on the horizon, he saw the shimmer of the sea. This was all that Moses was to know of Canaan, that land of all his dreams, for there, on that lonely mountain, God took unto Himself that faithful servant and noble leader.

THE DEATH OF MOSES.

22. CROSSING THE JORDAN

MOSES was dead, and after the days of mourning for him were over, the new leader, Joshua, took command, and the people promised him loyalty and obedience. "All that thou commandest us we will do," they said, "and whithersoever thou sendest us we will go."

The task that lay before Joshua was the conquest of the Promised Land. It was a great task, before which he might well have quailed, but strength came as he recalled the words: "Be strong and of a good courage, for the Lord thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest."

As general, Joshua must make his plan of campaign. From which direction should he attack? In the north there were great hills which barred the way. In the south were cities and strong fortresses. On the west lay the sea, while the eastern frontier was the great deep gorge forming the valley of the river Jordan. Here attack would be least expected, so from the east Joshua decided to advance.

When Joshua saw the river Jordan rushing down the gorge in flood he understood why this ravine was not protected by forts, even although on the farther bank stood the city of Jericho, the key to the whole country. "This is not a war of plunder," Joshua reminded the Israelites, "but a task to be carried through in God's way, and with His guidance." So for three days the people were commanded to sanctify themselves that they might be fit to follow the Ark as it led the way across the river Jordan.

As the twelve chosen men lifted the Ark and made their way to the water's edge, it looked as if they were walking straight to destruction in that boiling flood. But they asked no questions and made no complaint. At the foot of the ravine they saw the foaming torrent—but lo! right across stretched a pathway of solid earth. There in the midst of Jordan stood the Ark, speaking to that great multitude of the presence of their God, as they marched dry-shod over Jordan into the Promised Land.

CROSSING THE JORDAN.

23. THE TAKING OF JERICHO

THROUGHOUT the whole land of Canaan there was terror at the approach of the people of Israel, for it was felt there was some power amongst these people which nothing could withstand. Great fear, therefore, reigned in Jericho when the watchers on the towers reported that the hosts of Israel were encamped before the city.

Jericho was famous for its beauty. From his camp Joshua could see the palm trees that o'ertopped the walls, while from the balsam woods and fragrant gardens sweet perfumes came floating on the breeze. Yet the city was strongly fortified; its walls and gates would stand a lengthy siege.

Within the city walls all the fighting men had been mustered to beat back the attack, but even as they stood at their posts their hearts were full of fear. "What is the use of resisting?" they asked each other. "Who can stand against this power that fights for Israel?"

From the camp of Israel there issued forth a great host of armed men. Silently, without striking a single blow, they marched round the walls of Jericho. After them came seven priests, all robed in white, blowing their trumpets. As they marched before the Ark of God, they too compassed the walls, and after them came what seemed an endless company of fighting men. There was no sound from all the host except the blare of the trumpets as company after company compassed the walls and then returned to the camp. Fear and terror grew within the city.

Day after day for six days the same silent mysterious procession marched around the walls. Then on the seventh day, from earliest dawn the city was surrounded by those trampling hosts. Again and again and again they made the circuit of the walls—the blowing of the horns marking ever the passage of the Ark of God, until sheer terror held the people of Jericho paralysed.

Of a sudden there was a great prolonged blast upon the trumpets, then shouting broke forth from all the multitude. At this moment the walls fell flat, and so the host of Israel took possession of Jericho—their first stronghold in the Promised Land.

THE TAKING OF JERICHO.

24. THE CALL OF GIDEON

THE people of Israel were now settled in the Promised Land, and to many of them prosperity had come. But in spite of all the goodness of God they had forgotten Him, and for their rich harvests they gave thanks to Baal—the false god worshipped by the people of the land.

Then one day, when the valleys were standing thick with corn, disaster came upon them. Like a cloud of locusts, black and destructive, the Midianites came sweeping up the valley of Jezreel. They had come to plunder, and when they went away that fair, smiling valley was a scene of desolation.

Year after year these raiders came at harvest-time, until in terror the people fled before them, forced to hide in the caves and holes of the earth, glad if they were able to save enough corn to keep themselves alive.

One day, hidden in a cranny away up in the hills, Gideon was busy threshing in secret the little corn he had saved. As he thought of his people cowering in caves a fierce anger rose within him. " We are the chosen people of God," he thought. " He promised to lead us and protect us, but He has forsaken us."

As these fierce thoughts filled Gideon's mind, a shadow fell across the cranny where he stood. Fearing he had been discovered by the enemy, Gideon looked up, but found instead a stranger who greeted him with courtesy. " The Lord be with you, O mighty man of valour," said the stranger.

" How can the Lord be with us, driven to hide in holes of the earth ? " Gideon burst forth. " Why has all this misfortune befallen us ? Where are the miracles He used to perform in days of old ? I tell you He has forsaken us and delivered us into the hands of the Midianites."

The stranger saw how Gideon loved his people and how sore he was at heart. " Go, in your great might," he said, " and you will save Israel from her enemies."

" Oh, my lord," cried Gideon, suddenly humble, " how can I save my people ? My father is poor, and I am the youngest of his sons."

Again the stranger spoke, in a voice that somehow brought strength and peace to Gideon. " Surely the Lord will be with you," he said, " and in His strength you shall lead your people to victory."

THE CALL OF GIDEON.

25. GIDEON THE DELIVERER

SOON Gideon's call to arms sounded throughout all the northern tribes. Inspired by the courage of this new leader, thirty thousand fighting men rallied round his standard. Always the assurance came to him that the strength of God was his, and in that strength he went forward.

Leading out his forces, Gideon took up his position on Mount Gilboa, directly opposite the Midianites, already encamped on the other side of the valley. Gideon was doubtful of the courage of some of his men, so those who were afraid were allowed to go back, and only ten thousand of them remained. Then God said to Gideon that his army was still so large that the people might think they had gained the victory by their own power. So Gideon reduced his army to three hundred.

Gathering his little company round him, he gave his orders. "There must be a night attack," he said. "The utmost care and caution will be necessary. A careless step, a clattering of arms, even a spoken word, might be enough to rouse the enemy, and if they fall upon us we are undone. On three sides we must surround their camp, leaving open only the way towards Jordan. You will each take with you a torch, a water-jar, and a trumpet. Carry your lighted torches inside your jars; then, when I give the signal, every man will sound his trumpet, smash his jar to pieces, brandish his sword above his head, and press forward shouting, 'The sword of the Lord and of Gideon.'"

Silently, with the greatest caution, in three divisions, the little army stole down towards the Midianite camp. New guards were on duty there, but they heard nothing to warn them of these stealthy figures creeping through the darkness.

All at once there sounded through the stillness of the night a great blast of trumpets, then came a crash as of a thousand shields. The Midianites, startled from sleep, awoke to this terrifying din, and saw, as they thought, myriads of lights wheeling before their eyes.

Panic seized them. Cumbered with all their goods, their camels and their tents, they knew not what to do. So, drawing swords, each one fought for himself, intent only on making his escape. A great stampede began, and in wild rout the Midianites fled down the valley and across the river Jordan.

Thus, led by God, Gideon delivered his people from their oppressors.

GIDEON THE DELIVERER.

26. RUTH AND NAOMI

IT happened one year that the people of Bethlehem were in great distress. The crops had failed, and before long starvation lurked in every home.

" Come, my Naomi," said Elimelech one day to his wife, " we must flee from this famine and seek a land that can give its people bread."

So, with their two sons, they left the city that they loved, and made their way over the hills to the land of Moab, where there was no famine, and there they lived for many years in a strange country amongst strange but friendly people.

The years came and went, bringing both joy and sorrow to that little home. Great was Naomi's sorrow when her husband died; but she had joy in her sons, and that joy was doubled when they brought to her their wives, women of Moab, Ruth and Orpah by name.

Fair and winsome were they both, but it was Ruth who won Naomi's dearest love.

Again, however, sorrow came, for both the sons of Naomi died, and the three women were left alone, desolate in their widowhood. In her grief Naomi's thoughts then turned to her old home in Bethlehem, and thither she decided to return.

Leaning on the arms of her daughters she set out. The hearts of all were heavy, not only as they thought of parting, but also as they remembered all the sweet sadness of the past.

" Go now," said Naomi at length. " Return each of you to her mother's home, and may the Lord deal kindly with you as you have dealt with me."

" Surely," they said, " we will go with thee unto thy people."

" Nay," said Naomi. " Turn again, my daughters. It grieveth me for your sakes that the Lord hath sent me so much sorrow."

Orpah kissed her mother-in-law and returned to her own people, but Ruth could not return. In spite of all entreaties, she clung to Naomi. " Whither thou goest, I will go," she said. " Thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God."

Such love and such devotion Naomi could not refuse, so they returned to Bethlehem together, and there made their home.

The story tells how Boaz, a rich farmer of Bethlehem and a kinsman of Naomi, loved Ruth and married her.

Their grandson was King David, of whom you may read many stories, and Bethlehem, you know, is " David's royal city."

RUTH AND NAOMI.

27. THE CHILD SAMUEL

IN the little hill town of Ramah, on the slopes of Mount Ephraim in Samaria, there dwelt long ago a woman called Hannah. She was a good woman, and her husband loved her dearly, yet her heart was sore because she had no child. Year after year she prayed to God asking that He would send her a son. At last her prayer was answered, and she called her baby Samuel.

With great joy Hannah gave thanks to God for this most precious gift. Too precious for her keeping, she resolved to lend her child to the Lord, that he might learn to serve Him in the Temple.

So when Samuel was still quite a little boy, his father and mother took him to the Temple at Shiloh, and there they gave him into the keeping of Eli, the aged priest. Hannah missed her little child in her home in Ramah, but she rejoiced to think he served the great wise God.

One night, when all was hushed and quiet in the Temple, Samuel had lain down to sleep as usual near the Ark of God. Suddenly he heard a voice saying, " Samuel." He rose at once and ran to Eli, saying, " Here am I, for you called me." But Eli said, " Nay, my son, I called you not. Go and lie down again."

Once more the voice sounded, and once more Samuel ran to Eli. " Here am I," he said, " for you *did* call me."—" Nay," said Eli, " indeed I called you not ; go and lie down again."

Yet again the third time the voice sounded, calling, " Samuel, Samuel " ; and again Samuel went to Eli, this time quite, quite sure. " Here am I," he said, " for indeed you did call me."

Then Eli saw that it was the Lord that was calling Samuel—child as he was—so, with great tenderness, he blessed him and told him what to do. " Go and lie down," he said, " and if you hear the voice again, say, ' Speak, Lord, for Thy servant heareth.' " With a great awe in his heart Samuel went and lay down.

Once more the voice sounded, calling, " Samuel, Samuel." Trembling with excitement, Samuel's answer came, " Speak, for Thy servant heareth." So God revealed Himself to Samuel when he was a little child, and when he grew to be a man he became a prophet of the Lord.

THE CHILD SAMUEL.

28. SAUL GAINS HIS KINGDOM

SAMUEL had devoted his life to the guidance of his people, but there came a time when the people asked that they should have a king to rule over them like all the neighbouring nations.

While the people were making this demand a young man was drawing near to where Samuel was staying. He was tall and handsome, strong and fearless. This young man was Saul, the son of Kish, a chieftain of the tribe of Benjamin, and he was searching for his father's asses which had strayed. When Samuel saw him God put it into his mind that this was the leader that Israel required. So Saul was told that he was chosen to be captain over the people, but as yet no one must know.

As if nothing had happened, Saul returned to his father's house, but day by day as he went about his work he felt the thrill of the great secret he carried in his heart.

One evening, as Saul returned from his father's fields, where he had been following the plough all day, he heard a great commotion in the market-place. There he found messengers, footsore and dusty, surrounded by a crowd of people listening horror-stricken to the news they brought.

"What is the trouble?" asked Saul as he strode up towards the messengers. "We come from Jabesh-Gilead in great distress," they said. "The King of Ammon is encamped against us, and will make peace only on condition that he may thrust out the right eyes of all our fighting men. We have been granted seven days in which to seek for help."

When Saul heard this story of cruel tyranny, a fierce anger blazed within him. Turning to the oxen he had led up from the field, he hewed them in pieces, and thrusting the bleeding flesh into the hands of messengers, he sent them through the land with the message that the same should be done to the oxen of any who refused to follow him against the Ammonites.

Such a summons met with quick response. In a few days a huge army had rallied round Saul. Fired by the power and courage of their leader, they marched forth against the Ammonites and scattered them as dust before the wind.

Then with great rejoicing the people gathered at Gilgal, and there, before the Lord, Saul was declared King of Israel.

SAUL GAINS HIS KINGDOM.

29. JONATHAN AND HIS ARMOUR-BEARER

A HUGE army of the Philistines had come sweeping up over the hills to attack the kingdom of Israel. Terrified by their numbers, the people fled before them, hiding in caves and holes in the ground. But Saul and Jonathan, his son, stood firm, and although their army was small they encamped over against the Philistines on the heights of Gibeah. Only a deep narrow gorge separated the two armies. Attack seemed almost impossible. They could not fight across the gorge, and it would have been madness for either army to attempt to scale the other's height.

Drawing aside his armour-bearer one day, Jonathan whispered to him, " To-night I mean to attack the Philistine camp. If you are prepared to join me, meet me at dark; otherwise I go alone."—" Do all that is in your heart, my lord," came the brave reply ; " I shall be with you."

So that night these two brave men slipped out of the camp unseen, and made their way down the face of the ravine. Creeping silently from bush to bush and rock to rock, at last they reached the deep dark valley. Above them towered the cliffs, on the top of which the Philistines were encamped.

Leading the way, Jonathan made straight for the cleft that separated two spurs of the height. They had to climb up on all fours, hanging on to rocky ledges for their very lives. It was dark, and one false step meant certain death. In grim silence they toiled on, and then in the misty greyness of the morning they fell upon the enemy's camp.

" Ho," thought the Philistines, " here are some of those poor cringing slaves come forth from their holes to make an attack on us ! " But before the sneer was off their lips, Jonathan and his armour-bearer had leapt upon them and hewn a way into their ranks. Thinking a great crowd must be behind them, panic seized the Philistines, and, striking out blindly in their confusion, they beat down one another.

In the early dawn, from the height of Gibeah, Saul saw movement amongst the Philistines. At first he thought they were preparing for an attack, but, as he watched, he saw the whole Philistine army in flight. It was not until his own army had been numbered over that he discovered the deliverance had been won by Jonathan and his armour-bearer alone.

JONATHAN AND HIS ARMOUR-BEARER.

30. DAVID THE SHEPHERD

DAVID was the youngest son of Jesse, a rich farmer who lived in the city of Bethlehem. The flocks and herds belonging to the farm dotted the hillsides all around, where they were led to pasture every morning by Jesse's sons and trusted servants.

There were seven brothers older than David. To him as a lad they all seemed great grown men, while in their eyes he only seemed a child.

Many a time he had gone with his brothers while they tended the sheep, but it was long before they would listen to his pleading to be trusted with the sheep himself. At length that great day came, and very proudly David set out, staff in hand and sling in readiness, to lead forth his flock to pasture for the first time.

From the beginning David promised well as a shepherd. With great care he chose his pasture, looking for grass that was green and juicy, and as the sheep grazed all around he watched over them, calling back those that strayed too far, while all the time he was on the alert to ward off attack from bird or beast of prey.

At noontide he would lead his flocks to cool refreshing streams where they might quench their thirst, and toward evening he would lead them back to the sheepfold, often carrying the young lambs in his arms. Up the hillside the sheep would follow him, and as they filed past into the sheepfold he watched to see that every one was there, for he knew them all by name, and his keen eye was quick to note if any needed special care.

In the country where David lived flocks have to be guarded by night as well as by day, and it was not until David had done his night duty, sitting by his fire, wrapped in his sheep-skin cloak, listening for the slightest sound of a stealthy footfall, ready to do battle with the fiercest foe, that he could be called a shepherd. How long that first night in the open seemed to be, and how glad David was when the sun rose and put to flight the darkness !

So David trained to be a shepherd. His sheep knew his voice and followed whither he led, trusting him to guide them and to protect them with his strength.

DAVID THE SHEPHERD.

31. DAVID ANOINTED KING

AS time passed, David proved himself to be one of the bravest and best of shepherds. Young as he was, already the city had rung with the story of how he had fought single-handed against a lion and a bear, and slain them, in order to protect his flock. They were long, those days of shepherding out on the hillside, and many an hour did David beguile by making music for the sweet songs that sprang up in his heart, and dreaming dreams of greatness in the days to come.

One day as he watched his sheep on the hillside his quick ear caught the sound of a voice. As he listened it was his own name he heard. "Ho-ho! David; David, ho-ho!" rang across the valley, and there on the other side he saw one of his father's servants hurrying towards him, beckoning to him the while. Fearing some bad news, David ran to meet him.

"I have been sent to seek thee, David," panted the messenger. "I am to tend the sheep, and thou must hasten to the place of sacrifice, for Samuel the prophet has come to Bethlehem and has called all the sons of Jesse to make sacrifice unto the Lord with him. Nay, I know no more," he added, silencing the questions David fain would ask. "Only make haste, for all await thee there."

Quickly David bounded over the hillside towards the city, wondering all the time what could be the meaning of this summons. On he sped through the city gate towards the place of sacrifice, paying no heed to those who would have stopped and questioned him. At length, all flushed with hurry and excitement, he arrived before the altar of the Lord.

Samuel's heart rejoiced as this fair, handsome youth knelt in reverence before him, and David felt something of awe in the presence of this man of God. There was a moment of tense silence as Samuel waited for the leading of the Lord. Then, as the smoke of sacrifice rose to heaven, Samuel raised his hands in benediction. "Behold," he said, "the Lord's anointed!" and taking his horn of oil he anointed David in the midst of his brethren. There was only one thing this could mean—David the shepherd lad had been chosen as the next King of Israel.

DAVID ANOINTED KING.

32. DAVID AND GOLIATH

ISRAEL was at war with the Philistines, and David had been sent to inquire about the welfare of his soldier brothers. But as he approached the valley of Elah, where the armies lay encamped, no sound of battle broke the silence of the hills.

Suddenly a great shout rent the air. Hurrying forward, David saw a Philistine of gigantic size striding across the valley. Clothed in mail from head to foot, he was challenging to single combat the men of Israel. David waited for an answer to ring out from his side, but there was none.

" Does no one dare to fight this Philistine ? " David asked. " Nay, boy," was the reply, " these forty days, morning and evening, has this Goliath taunted us, till fear and shame have consumed our courage."

Angry and ashamed, David turned to the men about him. " Are you content to let this Philistine defy the armies of the living God ? " he asked.

Eliab, David's eldest brother, turned round swiftly. " What are you doing here ? " he shouted. " Go home and look after your handful of sheep in the wilderness, and leave men's work to men."

Making his way through the camp, David spoke to many of the shame of Israel's silence. " What answer would you give ? " some one asked. " The answer of a man who trusts in God," was his reply.

Just then David was called to appear before the king. " What do you here, boy," asked Saul, " making trouble with your idle words ? "—" They are not only words, my lord," cried David ; " I will go and fight this Philistine."

Once more, toward evening, Goliath's challenge rang out, but this time there was an answer. " Thou comest to me with a sword, and with a spear, and with a shield ; but I come to thee in the name of the Lord of Hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom thou hast defied. This day will the Lord deliver thee into my hand."

Infuriated at the insult of this boy answering his challenge, Goliath strode forward to destroy him ; but David had been watching his chance. His shepherd's sling whirled round—swift and sure the stone flew to its mark in the forehead of the giant. Goliath swayed and staggered, the spear fell from his grasp, and with a great clashing of his armour the champion of the Philistines fell conquered to the ground.

DAVID AND GOLIATH.

33. DAVID AND JONATHAN

DAVID'S victory over Goliath was hailed with the greatest joy. In a moment the unknown shepherd lad had become the hero of the day. Surrounded by bands of cheering soldiers David was escorted to the tent of Saul, where he received the thanks and praise of the king and of Abner, his general-in-chief.

In the gathering dusk, as David left the tent of the king, he was met by a tall, stalwart figure, who saluted him. " Hail, David, son of Jesse," he cried. " That was a brave deed bravely done, and proud am I to meet you in this hour of victory. In the name of the king's army, Jonathan, son of Saul, yields to you the honours of the day." Once more cheering burst forth, for Jonathan, the prince, was loved by all his men, and they admired the nobility with which he gave to this young champion his due.

David was thrilled to meet him of whose daring deeds he had heard so much, and as he looked into the brave steady eyes of the king's son his whole heart went out to him in admiration and in love. Here was one who was strong and brave—but more, one who was great enough to admire the courage and the prowess of one younger than himself. " How proud I should be," thought David, " if I could win the friendship of this man."

As Jonathan looked on the lad before him, so straight and strong, so brave and yet so young, his heart too went out to David, and, as they clasped hands there in the darkening, the soul of Jonathan was knit with the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul. " In token of the covenant we have made with one another," said Jonathan, " and the oath of friendship we have sworn in the sight of God, and that all men may know you are my friend, wear these for me, I pray you."

Then with his own hands Jonathan placed his robe on the shoulders of David, and armed him with princely sword and spear and bow. The soldiers looked on in hushed silence, for they felt how solemn was this covenant of friendship made before God and shown forth thus in the eyes of men.

Before long, when David was driven from the court by the jealousy of Saul, he owed his life to the loyalty and fearlessness of Jonathan his friend.

DAVID AND JONATHAN.

34. DAVID SPARING SAUL

DRIVEN from court by the mad jealousy of Saul, David fled for refuge to the caves amongst the hills surrounding the Dead Sea. But even there, company after company of men sought him out and joined themselves to him, so that ere long, outlaw though he was, he found himself in charge of six hundred fighting men.

Pursued from place to place by the armies of King Saul, the outlaws had many a narrow escape. All their scouting skill was needed to outwit the vastly greater numbers of the enemy. At one time, David's hiding-place having been made known by a tribe whom he had helped, Saul and his army swooped down and encamped in the valley of Hachilah.

In the darkness two figures crept over the hillside towards the camp of Saul —they were David and his nephew Abishai. The camp was well made—surrounded by baggage-wagons, protected by trenches, guarded by line upon line of soldiers—while, in the very centre, surrounded by his bodyguard, lay Saul the king. A deep sleep had fallen upon the whole army, and no one stirred as David and Abishai crept nearer and nearer to the centre of the camp.

At length they stood beside King Saul where he lay asleep, his spear and his cruse of water at his head. How helpless he was, this man who had so often threatened David's life, and what a chance was here for revenge. So ran Abishai's thoughts. " See," he whispered to David, his voice trembling with excitement, " God hath delivered thine enemy into thine hand this day. Let me smite him, I pray thee. With one stroke I shall smite him to the earth. I shall not need to strike a second time."

In a moment David was on guard. His hand shot forth to stay Abishai's upraised arm. " Destroy him not," he commanded, " for who dare stretch forth his hand against the Lord's anointed ? But come, take the spear that is at his head, and the cruse of water, and let us go."

Disappointed, at first perhaps disapproving, Abishai obeyed. It was not until the morning, when he saw King Saul humbled and ashamed before the generosity of David, that he realized how great a victory his master had won in returning good for evil.

DAVID SPARING SAUL.

35. DAVID KING OVER ISRAEL

KING SAUL, tortured by fits of madness and black moods of jealousy, was losing the regard both of his subjects and his army, for it was impossible to honour a king who neglected his country's good in order to satisfy a mean personal grudge.

The Philistines were not slow to take advantage of the weakness of Israel, and ere long their invading hosts came sweeping up the plain of Esdraelon. Saul went out to meet them, pitching his camp on Mount Gilboa, and there the battle was lost and won. Overcome by the arrows of the Philistines as well as by their greater skill in warfare, the army of Israel was soon thrown into confusion. Some fled before the Philistines, while many lay slain on the slopes of Mount Gilboa, amongst them Saul and his three sons, whilst the Philistines poured unchecked into the land of Israel.

In Ziklag, where he lay in hiding, David received this sad news of defeat, disaster, and death, and his heart was sore within him. Saul his enemy was dead—yes, but Jonathan his friend was dead also, while the country was without a leader and in the power of the Philistines. For a few days he remained where he was, and then with his following of fighting men he made his way to Hebron. There the tribe of Judah came and hailed him as their king, each man bending low the knee as he swore fealty to this new lord.

But David's troubles were not yet over. For seven years the country remained divided, many of the tribes owning as king one of Saul's sons, whom Abner, his old general, supported. The years of strife wore on, but at long last David's patience was rewarded, and the whole country came and owned him as their king. " The elders of Israel came to the king in Hebron, and he made a league with them before the Lord, and they anointed David king over Israel."

Hopes were running high, for it was whispered everywhere, " The Lord hath spoken of David, saying, ' By the hand of my servant David I will save my people Israel out of the hand of the Philistines, and out of the hand of all their enemies.' " But first peace must be restored at home, so David sought in every way to heal the wounds that civil war had made, to end the feuds that had sprung up, and to bind together his people in the strong bonds of peace and mutual trust.

DAVID KING OVER ISRAEL.

36. DAVID BRINGS THE ARK TO JERUSALEM

DAVID'S counsellors had been urging him to attack the Philistines. " I have listened to your counsel," he answered at length, " but I have other plans. What we need is a stronghold, and the stronghold on which my heart is set is the city of Jerusalem."—" Why, my lord," cried Joab, " Jerusalem is in the power of the Jebusites, and they boast it is so strongly fortified that the blind and the lame could hold it against any foe."

" Yes," said David, " I know their boast, but I have a plan that I know will commend itself to you." Then David told of a secret entrance to the city. It was a hazardous venture, but David's men were brave, so the Jebusites were taken by surprise and Jerusalem became the capital of Israel.

But David wanted his capital to be more than a stronghold ; he wanted it to be the holy city, where the tribes of Israel would go up to worship God. So he prepared to bring to it the Ark of God, believing that with the Ark would come the very presence of God Himself.

Accompanied by a great number of men and women, David set out to bring the Ark to Jerusalem. He had laid aside his kingly robes and wore the garments of a priest, for he wanted to appear that day simply as a servant of the Most High God.

What a glad procession it was that wound its way along the roads leading to Jerusalem, where it stood high upon its hill ! To the music of trumpets and cornets, psalteries and harps, the people sang glad songs of praise, while there were some whose joy was so great that only dancing could express it.

At length the hill was climbed, and with a great shout of joy the gates were thrown open for the King of Glory to come in. Carried away by his own gladness, David danced before the Lord as the Ark was borne to its abiding place. That day the heart of David was full, and in his joy he sang praises unto God :

> " Sing unto the Lord all the earth,
> For great is the Lord and greatly to be praised.
>
> Glory and Honour are in His presence,
> Strength and Gladness are in His place.
>
> Give unto the Lord the glory due unto His name."

And all the people said " Amen " and praised the Lord.

DAVID BRINGS THE ARK TO JERUSALEM.

37. SOLOMON DEDICATING THE TEMPLE

AFTER the death of David, Solomon his son was declared king. Realizing the greatness of his task and his unfitness for his great office, Solomon prayed that God should give him an understanding heart, that he might judge the people wisely and discern between good and bad. His prayer was abundantly answered, and the fame of Solomon's wisdom spread through all the earth.

It had been the desire of David's heart to build in Jerusalem a house of God, but it was Solomon's reign which was glorified by this great work. He made a league with Hiram, King of Tyre, and soon away on the northern hills cedar trees and fir trees were being cut down and sent by Hiram's servants to Jerusalem for the building of the Temple. The walls of the Temple were built of great blocks of stone. These were hewn and cut in the quarries and there made ready, so that neither hammer nor axe nor any tool of iron should be heard in the house of God while it was building.

At last the Temple was complete. There was nothing to equal it for magnificence in all the land. Carvings adorned the walls and pillars, and the very floor was overlaid with gold.

Now the great day came when the work of men's hands should be dedicated unto God. The court of the Temple was filled with a great white-robed choir carrying cymbals and psalteries and harps. When the priests appeared from out the holy place, where they had sanctified themselves, there was a blast of trumpets, and then that whole gathering of people broke forth into song, their voices blending all as one as they praised the Lord for His goodness and His mercy.

Then the house was filled as with a cloud, and silence reigned as the people bowed before the presence of the Lord, for the glory of God filled the whole Temple.

Solomon the king stood before the altar of God, and before all the people. Spreading forth his hands, he prayed that God would ever hearken unto the prayers of His servants, forgive their sins, and defend them in times of trouble.

Turning to the people, he commended them to God, beseeching them to walk in all His ways and keep His commandments, so that the Lord God might be made known to all the nations of the earth.

SOLOMON DEDICATING THE TEMPLE.

38. THE QUEEN OF SHEBA VISITS SOLOMON

WONDROUS tales of the wisdom and the glory of Solomon, King of Israel, were told in many lands. People spoke of the kings who sent him tribute, of his ships that brought strange things from across the seas, and of his horses and chariots that came from Egypt.

Away across the deserts of Arabia lay a rich land, ruled over by a queen—the Queen of Sheba. Many reports of the greatness of Solomon had reached her ears. If these reports were true, she thought, his wisdom and his magnificence must be great indeed ; but she determined to visit his court and find out for herself.

So one day there rode into Jerusalem the Queen of Sheba and all her train. First came the queen herself, arrayed in gorgeous silks and wearing many precious stones. Then came a long caravan of camels, bearing to Solomon the king an offering of rare spices and gold and precious stones.

There were many questions in the mind of this foreign queen, questions which sought to probe deep mysteries, so she communed long with Solomon, talking to him of all that was in her heart. To every question he could give an answer, such was the wisdom that had come to him from God.

With wondering eyes the Queen of Sheba beheld the magnificence of this great king. His throne was of ivory, overlaid with gold, led up to by six steps on which stood twelve lions. They also seemed to speak of the mighty strength and power of this king.

Fascinated, she visited his palaces, viewing with wonder that great hall called the House of the Forest of Lebanon. Its lofty roof was supported by such a countless number of cedar pillars that it seemed indeed a very forest of Lebanon. In this great hall hung three hundred glittering golden shields to be used in state processions. There were the king's feasts, too, served on golden dishes by slaves in costly raiment, while the air was filled with strains of lovely music.

Last of all, the queen beheld the Temple. She felt its glory and its wonder, and blessed the Lord God of Israel who had made Solomon king that he might rule in judgment and in justice over his people.

" Truly," the queen said, as she departed, " of the wisdom and glory of Solomon the half had not been told me."

THE QUEEN OF SHEBA VISITS SOLOMON.

39. ELIJAH AND THE RAVENS

ELIJAH had grown up in the land of Gilead, which lies to the east of the river Jordan. It is a land of lonely grass-covered hills, swept by the great clean winds of heaven. " The cold is always at home " on these clear mountain heights, the people say. Far away from towns, amongst shepherd folk, living a hard open-air life, Elijah had grown to strong and hardy manhood. He had learned to read the sky, and by the passage of the clouds he could tell when storms would break upon the mountains. There, too, in the wide lonely spaces, he had come to know God, and often heard Him speak in the wind and in the sunshine, in storm and in calm.

Across the Jordan lay the kingdom of Israel, of which Ahab was the king. Canaan was now divided into two kingdoms, Judah and Israel, and Ahab's capital was Samaria, where he lived in great splendour with Jezebel his queen. Now Jezebel came from Tyre, where the people worshipped a fierce sun-god called Baal, and this god she continued to worship when she came to dwell in Samaria.

Before long Jezebel determined that she would force all the people of Israel to worship her god, and so a cruel persecution was set on foot. The queen's messengers went through the land throwing down the altars built to God, and killing all that would not bow the knee to Baal. So it came about that the name of the Lord God was no longer heard in Ahab's court.

Then one day a strange figure, with deep-set burning eyes, barefoot and bareheaded, came striding into the presence of the king. It was Elijah. Fearlessly he delivered his message : " As the Lord God liveth, before whom I stand, there shall be neither dew nor rain these years but according to my word."

Just as suddenly he disappeared again. Drought and famine came upon the land, and there was sore distress. In every corner Ahab sought that mysterious prophet, but he could not find him, for Elijah had been led by God to seek refuge by the brook Cherith, amongst the hills of his own land. There each day the ravens brought him food in the morning and in the evening, and he drank of the water of the brook. So was his life preserved.

ELIJAH AND THE RAVENS.

40. NABOTH'S VINEYARD

THE city of Jezreel stood upon a hill in a wide, lovely valley which stretched from Mount Carmel down to the river Jordan. Within this walled city Ahab built a beautiful palace for himself and Jezebel his queen.

Just beyond the walls of the city and close to the palace grounds there was a vineyard, which climbed in terrace above terrace up the hill. This vineyard belonged to a man called Naboth, who lived in Jezreel. His father and his grandfather had owned this vineyard before him, and with great care Naboth tended his vines month after month, that he might have a good harvest of grapes when the autumn came.

Now, as Ahab looked from the walls of his palace, he thought it would be a splendid thing if that vineyard could be turned into gardens for his pleasure. So he went and sought Naboth, and said, " Give me your vineyard, for it is near my house, and I will give you a better vineyard for it, or else I will give you the worth of it in money." But to Naboth there could be no better vineyard than his own, and no amount of money would buy it from him, so bravely he answered Ahab the king, " The Lord forbid that I should give the inheritance of my fathers unto you."

Angry and disappointed Ahab went away. " Let not your spirit be sad," said Jezebel, when Ahab told her what had happened, " for I will give you the vineyard of Naboth."

Soon letters were delivered in Jezreel, written in Ahab's name and sealed with the royal seal. These letters had been written by Jezebel ; they accused Naboth of blasphemy against God and the king, and called upon the rulers of Jezreel to proclaim a fast and stone to death the offender. So Naboth was stoned to death near the gate of the city, where the dogs came and licked his blood.

Then Ahab went to the vineyard he had stolen, to make of it his garden. But there Elijah met him, anger burning in those deep-set eyes.

" Hast thou found me, O mine enemy ? " cried Ahab.

" I have found thee," answered Elijah, " because thou hast sold thyself to work the works of evil. Thus saith the Lord, 'In the place where dogs licked the blood of Naboth, there shall dogs lick thy blood—even thine.' "

NABOTH'S VINEYARD.

41. NAAMAN AND ELISHA

TO the north of the kingdom of Israel lay the land of Syria, and war was constantly taking place between these two peoples. Crossing the frontier, the Syrian army often sacked towns and villages, and carried off the people as slaves. It so happened that on one of these raids a little Hebrew maid was carried away captive by Naaman, the captain of the Syrian host.

Naaman was a very great man in the land of Syria. He was a valiant soldier, and held in high honour by the king for the many victories that he had won. But Naaman was a leper, and he knew that one day he would have to leave his home and the service of his king, and go away to die a lonely death.

The little captive maid admired the great Syrian captain, and understood the sorrow of his life. One day she said to her mistress, " Oh, if only my lord could meet Elisha, the prophet of Israel, he would cure him of his leprosy."

Eagerly the words of the little maid were repeated to Naaman, and with the glad consent of the King of Syria he set out to seek the prophet of Israel. He drove in a handsome chariot, attended by many servants, and followed by a train of camels bearing rich gifts for the man of God.

All the way Naaman pictured to himself how Elisha would bow before him and cure him in the sight of all. But when the great equipage drew up at Elisha's door, the prophet did not come out to meet the captain. Instead, he sent his servant with this message, " Go and wash in Jordan seven times, and you will be cured."

Naaman was disappointed and drove off in a great rage. " The river Jordan ! " he sneered. " Why, the rivers of Damascus are finer by far. I shall bathe in them." But as he drove on his anger cooled, and at length his servants persuaded him to do as Elisha had commanded. So he drove down to the river Jordan, and in its waters he washed and washed and washed.

At length there was a great shout of joy, for Naaman's leprosy was cured and he was clean.

Ashamed now of his stupid pride and rage, Naaman returned to Elisha and stood before him, declaring, " There is no God in all the earth except the God of Israel."

NAAMAN AND ELISHA.

42. ELISHA'S HEAVENLY DEFENDERS

WAR was raging once more between Israel and Syria, and the King of Syria, a skilled soldier, had planned the campaign with the greatest care. But on every hand his armies were out-manœuvred, and never once did they find the army of Israel where they expected it to be.

Impatient and angry, the King of Syria recalled his officers. "You were entrusted to carry out my plans," he said to them, "but you have been outwitted time after time. The plans were sound. There is no reason therefore for defeat, except that we have been betrayed. None knew our plans but you. There must be a traitor in your midst: let him stand forth!"

The soldiers knew the king, and feared him in this mood. "We are betrayed, my lord," cried one; "but he who makes known our plans to the King of Israel is Elisha, the man of God."

"Find out where he is," commanded the king, "and I will send and take him captive."

Soon it was reported that Elisha was in Dothan, a little town standing on a hill, not far from Samaria.

To Dothan, therefore, the Syrian army went. Under cover of the darkness, stealthily, secretly, rank upon rank, they closed in round that quiet little town.

In the morning, just as dawn was breaking, the servant of Elisha went up to the housetop. Looking round, he was startled and dismayed to see the familiar hills occupied by the whole vast army of the Syrians—footmen and horsemen and chariots, thousands upon thousands of them, ready to attack this defenceless little town.

Terrified he sought Elisha. "Alas, my master," he cried, "what shall we do? The hosts of Syria are encamped against us." But Elisha was not alarmed. "Fear not," he said, "for those that are with us are greater than those that are with them."

The servant could not understand, but as Elisha stood by him on the housetop he knew that he was speaking with God. "See," he said, "the hosts of the Lord are round about us." Then the eyes of the lad were opened, and he saw that the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha. He became aware of a new Presence of might and power. This Presence he knew to be the secret of Elisha's strength.

ELISHA'S HEAVENLY DEFENDERS.

43. THE BOY JOASH CROWNED KING

ONE day a chariot of war entered the city of Jerusalem. It moved very slowly, for it bore the dead body of King Ahaziah. He had done much evil in his days, in which he had been aided by his mother Athaliah. Now that her son was dead Athaliah desired to rule, so she ordered the massacre of every one of royal blood in Jerusalem. A great wave of terror swept through the city as Athaliah's cruel orders were obeyed.

From the scene of slaughter came two panic-stricken women—one of them carrying a baby in her arms—and fled for safety to the Temple. The baby was Joash, the youngest son of the dead king, and he was being carried to safety by his nurse.

Unaware of the escape of Joash, Athaliah then ruled as queen, and all the land groaned under her tyranny.

Years passed, and still the little prince remained in hiding in the Temple. Meanwhile Jehoiada, the high priest, was making plans for restoring him to the throne of his fathers.

When Joash was seven years old Jehoiada thought the time had come to carry out his plans. Secretly he called together the captains of the army, and priests and Levites also from all the country round. To them he told his secret and unfolded his plans. In wonder they listened, and gladly promised to set the boy king on the throne and to serve him in loyalty.

Then on the appointed day they all stood ready at their posts. The gates of the city were guarded, a watch was set over the queen's palace, and a ring of soldiers, armed with spears and shields, surrounded the throne that had been set up in the Temple. The Temple court was filled with a great throng of white-robed figures, the singers of the Temple.

When all was ready, Jehoiada, the high priest, led forth the little lad. "Behold the king's son," he cried. "He shall reign over the land, as the Lord said unto his fathers." Then, setting him upon the throne, Jehoiada placed a crown upon his head, and declared him king in the presence of all the people.

The Temple rang with shouts of joy, the people clapped their hands, the choir burst forth into singing, and trumpets sounded as all the people shouted, "God save the king! Long live Joash, King of Judah!"

THE BOY JOASH CROWNED KING.

44. DANIEL IN THE KING'S COURT

THE kingdom of Judah had been conquered by Nebuchadnezzar, King of Babylon. Leaving their beloved Jerusalem a mass of smoking ruins, the people were driven as captives to the city of Babylon. Never in all their lives had they imagined anything like the wonder and magnificence of this great city, with its massive walls, great towering buildings, terraced gardens, and busy harbours.

One day a strange, impressive figure made his way through the Jewish colony. He was dressed in gorgeous robes and drove in a splendid chariot. Surely, the captives thought, this must be a servant of the king. In fear and silence they watched, wondering what new plans were afoot.

Then, from amongst the Jews, this great man chose four lads, Daniel and three of his friends, and ordered that they be taken to the king's palace. These youths, who were handsome in appearance, noble of bearing, and quick of mind, had been selected that they might be trained and educated to become servants of the king.

Their days now were spent in the palace, where they must learn how to attend the king. But most of their time was to be spent in deep study of the wisdom and learning of the Chaldeans; for they knew much of art and science and medicine, and more than any others about the stars.

Each day food was sent to them from the king's table, the very finest food that could be had. But because Daniel and his friends were Jews, there were certain foods which their religion forbade them to eat. It would have been easy to pay no attention to this and to eat all the fine things that came their way, but Daniel and his friends stood out bravely, refusing the forbidden meats, risking the king's displeasure rather than be disloyal to the faith of their people.

Diligently the Jewish youths studied in the great libraries of Babylon, and when at length they were brought again before the king that he might question them, he was well satisfied. In appearance they were strong and healthy, and in learning the king found them to be "ten times better than all the learned men and astrologers that were in his realm."

Seeing the great wisdom of Daniel, the king made him ruler over the whole province of Babylon, and under him he appointed as governors his three friends, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego.

DANIEL IN THE KING'S COURT.

45. THE FIERY FURNACE

NE day all the princes and governors of the province of Babylon were summoned to appear before the king.

Before them stood a great golden image made by order of the king, and which now, in the presence of all his rulers, he declared to be holy, set apart as an object of worship. Then a herald cried aloud the decree of the king : " To you it is commanded, O people of every nation, that when ye hear the sound of cornet, flute, harp, and all kinds of music, ye shall fall down and worship the golden image that Nebuchadnezzar hath set up. And whoso falleth not down and worshippeth, shall the same hour be cast into the midst of a burning fiery furnace."

Before long it was made known to the king that the three Jews, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, had refused to bow in worship before the image he had set up.

Furious at their disobedience, he summoned them to come before him. " Because ye have refused to bow down and worship the golden image which I have set up," he thundered, as they stood before him, " ye shall be cast into the fiery furnace ; and who is the God that shall deliver you out of my hands then ? "

Calmly the Jews made answer, " It may be that our God will deliver us from the fiery furnace ; but even if not, be it known unto thee that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up."

Then the king was full of fury. " Let the furnace be heated seven times as hot as usual," he cried, " and cast therein these three men bound."

This was done, and for a time Nebuchadnezzar watched. Then he cried, " We cast three men bound into the fire, but now I see four men, all unbound, walking in the midst of the flames, and they have no hurt. Behold ! the form of the fourth is like unto the Son of God."

Nebuchadnezzar ordered their release and went to meet them, declaring in the presence of all the people : " Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, who hath sent His angel to deliver those who trusted in Him, yielding their bodies rather than worship any god except their own God. Behold, His kingdom shall be an everlasting kingdom, and His dominion from generation to generation."

THE FIERY FURNACE.

46. BELSHAZZAR'S FEAST

BELSHAZZAR, the King, was entertaining a great number of guests in one of the magnificent palaces of Babylon. The winecups were filled again and again, and revelry was at its height.

Flushed with wine, the King rose from his seat upon the dais. "Go," he commanded certain of his slaves, "and bring the golden vessels that came from the Temple in Jerusalem. These 'holy' vessels," he added in mockery, "will give distinction to our feast."

The King was obeyed, and the holy vessels, dedicated to the worship of God, were used to regale the drunken guests of a foolish King.

Suddenly the King's eyes became fixed, his mocking laughter died upon his lips, his face became ashen with fear. Silence fell upon the guests as they saw this change on the King. They turned to look where his gaze was fixed, and there, on the wall near the dais, in the full glare of the lights, they saw a hand. It moved across the wall, and as it moved it wrote. Sobered by terror, that great company watched the moving hand. At length the writing ceased, and four words stood out in bold letters upon the wall.

Belshazzar summoned the wise men of Babylon, but they stood baffled, unable to read the riddle on the wall.

At length Daniel was brought in. In the midst of the scene of revelry he beheld the holy vessels from the Temple in Jerusalem. Turning to the King, therefore, the prophet rebuked him for the evil of his ways. "Belshazzar," he said, "thou hast lifted up thyself against the Lord of Heaven; drinking out of the vessels of His house, thou hast praised thy gods of silver and of gold, of brass, iron, wood and stone; but thou hast mocked at and defied the God in whose hands is thy life."

Then turning to the writing on the wall, he said, "These are the words which are written: MENE, MENE, TEKEL, UPHARSIN, and this is the meaning of the words: The days of thy kingdom are numbered; thou the ruler hast been weighed and found wanting; thy kingdom shall be divided and given to thine enemies."

Belshazzar's doom fell quickly upon him. While he and his courtiers had been feasting, the enemy had advanced unheeded. That night Babylon was taken, Belshazzar was slain, and his kingdom was seized by the King of Persia.

BELSHAZZAR'S FEAST.

47. DANIEL IN THE LIONS' DEN

KING DARIUS now ruled in Babylon, and under him Daniel had been raised to the highest position in the land. The other rulers and governors were so jealous that he, a Jew, should be preferred before them, that they all gathered together in league against him. " There is only one way in which we can trap him," they all agreed, " and that is in some matter concerning the worship of his God."

Soon after a number of these rulers waited upon the king. " King Darius, live for ever," they said in salutation. " From all the rulers and the presidents, the governors and captains of the kingdom, we have come to lay a petition before your Majesty." The king bade them say on. " We beg your Majesty to make a strong decree, binding on all your subjects, that for thirty days no prayer be made to any god or man except unto you, O king. Whoso disregards this edict shall be cast into the den of lions."

The decree was made, and sealed with the royal seal, but Daniel paid no heed. Well aware that his life hung in the balance, he went home as usual and made his prayers to God three times every day.

In great excitement Daniel's enemies then rushed to the king. " Daniel has disobeyed the law which your Majesty has made," they cried. " Let him be seized and cast into the den of lions."

Then the king saw how he had been tricked by the enemies of Daniel, but there was no escape. Do what he would, the laws of the Medes and Persians could not be broken, so Daniel was seized and thrown into the lions' den.

All night long the king was tortured with remorse. Very early in the morning he made his way to the den of lions, and cried out with a voice full of grief, " O Daniel, servant of the living God, has thy God been able to deliver thee from the lions ? "

Then from within the lions' den the voice of Daniel sounded. " O king, live for ever," he cried. " My God hath sent His angel and hath shut the lions' mouths that they have done me no hurt, for I was innocent in His sight."

Then the king was exceeding glad that the life of Daniel had been spared, and ordered him to be brought up out of the den.

DANIEL IN THE LIONS' DEN.

48. THE END OF THE EXILE

THE Jewish captives had spent nearly forty years in Babylon. Although it was a magnificent city, and there was much opportunity for trading and growing rich, yet they longed with a deep longing for their own land. The hearts of the exiles were sad.

" By the rivers of Babylon,
There we sat down, yea, we wept,
When we remembered Zion."

It was not only the remembrance of Zion that made them sad, it was the feeling that God was angry with them, and that they had lost His favour for ever. Yet they sought Him in worship, meeting in each other's houses on the Sabbath day.

One Sabbath, at one such meeting, there was great excitement. A scroll had been found, written by an unknown hand; it bore a message that brought hope to the hearts of the exiles. The doors were guarded carefully, while these words were read:

" Comfort ye, comfort ye, my people,
Saith your God.
Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem,
And cry unto her,
That her warfare is accomplished,
That her iniquity is pardoned."

God, then, would not always chide; the exile would not last for ever.

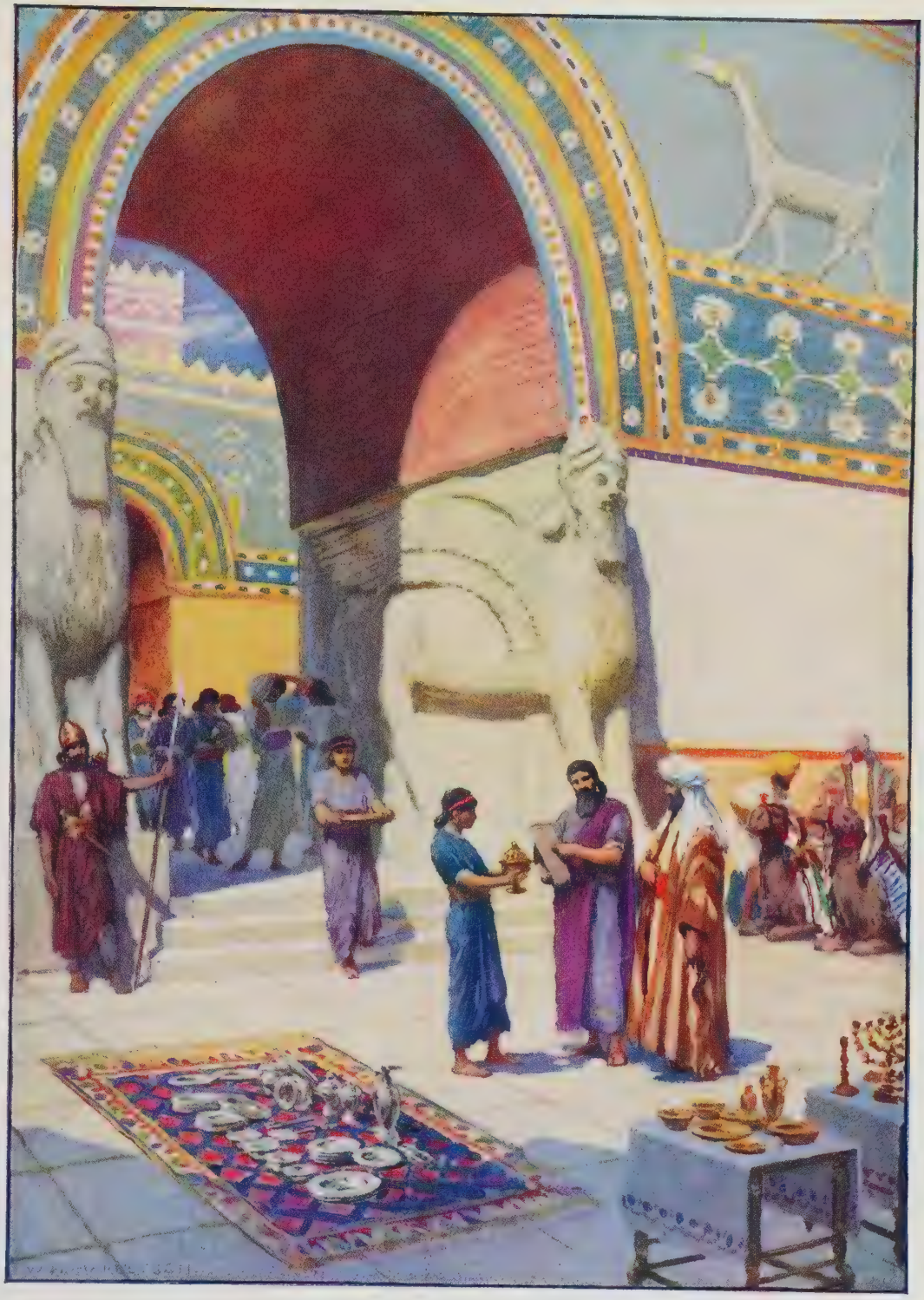
Time after time other scrolls were found, until there came one which foretold that the Chaldeans would be overthrown and the captives would be set free:

" God saith of Cyrus, He is my shepherd,
And shall perform all my pleasure:
He shall build my city,
And shall set mine exiles free."

The message of the scroll was true—Cyrus came in all his power, conquered the land of Babylon, and set the Jewish captives free.

" Whosoever will," ran his decree, " let him go up to Jerusalem and build the house of the Lord God of Israel; and whosoever remaineth, let him send silver and gold, goods and beasts, as an offering for the house of God. And, behold, those vessels of gold and silver which Nebuchadnezzar brought from Jerusalem, they shall be restored unto you, and taken back, every one to the house of the Lord, which ye shall build in your own land."

So the years of exile ended, and the people returned carrying their sacred vessels with them, and resolved to be obedient to the Lord their God.



THE END OF THE EXILE.

49. NEHEMIAH'S PETITION TO THE KING

ALTHOUGH most of the Jewish captives, liberated by the decree of Cyrus, had gone back to their own land, some still remained in Babylon. Amongst these was Nehemiah, who was cupbearer to the king.

Nehemiah had never seen Jerusalem, but he had heard a great deal about it. All his life he had loved to think of that holy city, and he felt he knew the winding streets that made their way up the hill to the great and glorious Temple which Solomon had built. Although he lived in the king's palace in Babylon, his heart was in Jerusalem—the city of his dreams.

Many a time as he went about his duties in the palace he would think about those who had returned to Jerusalem. He would wonder how they found the city after all those years, and what they were doing.

Then it happened one day that certain Jews from Jerusalem came to Babylon. Quickly Nehemiah found them, and eagerly he plied them with questions. They told him that the Temple had been rebuilt, but that the city was a reproach to all, for its walls were broken down, and its gates burnt with fire.

When Nehemiah heard these tidings he was sore at heart, for he knew how enemies would mock at a capital so ill defended. Night and day he thought about Jerusalem, and prayed to God that somehow its disgrace might be removed.

One day, as Nehemiah was in attendance on the king, he seemed to forget where he was, for his thoughts were far away in Jerusalem, and his heart was sad.

"Wherefore are you sad, Nehemiah?" asked the king. Nehemiah was afraid, for it was dangerous to displease the king. "O sir," he cried, "the city of my fathers lieth waste, and its gates are consumed with fire."

"Have you then a request to make?" the king asked kindly. For a moment Nehemiah prayed to God for grace, and then he made his request. "If it please the king, and if I have found favour in thy sight, I pray that thou wouldst send me to the city of Jerusalem, the city of my fathers, that I may rebuild its walls."

The king was pleased to grant Nehemiah's petition, and soon he rode forth, accompanied by captains and horsemen, his mind full of plans for the rebuilding of the holy city.

NEHEMIAH'S PETITION TO THE KING.

50. REBUILDING THE WALLS OF JERUSALEM

AFTER many days of travel, Nehemiah drew near to Jerusalem. Knowing that there were enemies on every hand, who had no desire to see Jerusalem a walled city once again, Nehemiah kept in hiding for three days. Then he arose by night, and, saddling his horse, he rode round the walls of the city. Nothing but desolation met his eyes, for the walls were indeed in ruins, and the gates consumed by fire. His task was a great one, but Nehemiah was not dismayed.

Next day the priests and rulers were called together, and then Nehemiah told how God had called him to arise and build the walls of Jerusalem. Their hearts were kindled by Nehemiah's courage and enthusiasm, and they answered with one voice, " Let us rise up and build."

Soon gangs of men were at work all round the walls. Rubbish was cleared away and new foundations were laid, then stones were cut and shaped and put in their places, and soon the walls began to rise.

Already the anger of the Samaritans was aroused. In companies they came to jeer at the workmen, saying, " What are those feeble Jews doing? They work so hard, do they think they will finish in a day? A poor wall indeed they build, a fox could knock it down!" But the workmen paid no heed, for they had a mind to work.

At length news came that the Samaritans were advancing with an army against Jerusalem. Fear came upon the builders, and many strange excuses were made to Nehemiah.

" Hearken," he said to them at length. " If the Samaritans are approaching, let us be ready to meet them. Let every one of you be armed, some with swords, some with spears, and some with bows and arrows. Yet shall the building of the wall go on, for every armed man shall be a builder, and every builder shall be armed. I myself will be on guard. At the first sign of danger a trumpet shall be sounded; then you shall cease building, take up your weapons, and rally for defence."

Hearing of these preparations, the Samaritans did not attack, and the wall rose and rose until it was completed. The great gates were slipped into their sockets, at sundown the bolts were shot, and Jerusalem was a defended city once again.

So Nehemiah built the city's walls that God might be glorified.

REBUILDING THE WALLS OF JERUSALEM.

51. THE ANGEL CHOIR

FAR away amongst the hills that girdle quiet Nazareth lived Joseph and his fair young wife Mary. Their home was simple, and they loved each other dearly. Joseph was a quiet man, kindly and gentle, and Mary was sweet and gracious, loved by all who knew her.

One day a Roman notice was posted in Nazareth. "It is decreed by Cæsar Augustus," the notice ran, "that a record shall be made of all the people in the land. For this purpose the head of each family must go to his own city, there to record his name and the names of his family."

As Joseph read the notice he frowned, for it meant that he must go to Bethlehem, nearly seventy miles away, and he did not want to leave Mary just then.

"Bethlehem," Mary murmured, when she heard about it, "the city of David! I should like to go there with you." So they set out together on their long journey, Mary riding on an ass, and Joseph walking by her side.

After some days they mounted the hill on which stood Bethlehem, and entered the city; but it seemed that all the world was there before them. Crowds filled the narrow streets, all pushing and jostling, caring nothing for the weary travellers who had come from Nazareth.

Every house in the town was full; there was no room anywhere for Joseph and Mary. At length, in desperation, they sought the inn; but even there there was no room, and all the shelter they could find was in the stables, where there was a cave hollowed out of the rock.

Joseph did what he could for Mary's comfort, and there, that very night, her little Baby was born, and she laid Him in a manger for His bed.

The town was very still and quiet, the sky was clear and bright with stars. Suddenly a wondrous music filled the air; through the stillness it echoed loud and clear. For over the plains of Bethlehem, where shepherds watched their flocks, a great multitude of the heavenly host had appeared, praising God and singing, "Glory to God in the highest, on earth peace, goodwill toward men."

Like a great white light the angel host streamed on, while in the humble stable Mary and Joseph looked with wonder on this Child, whose coming the angels had foretold.

THE ANGEL CHOIR.

52. THE INFANT JESUS AND THE SHEPHERDS

BUT beyond Bethlehem, in the faint light of the stars, could be seen the hills and plains where, like David of old, shepherds tended their flocks and herds. Even now, in the stillness of the night, a flicker of flame from a cranny in the rocks told of their watch-fire.

Round it sat the shepherds wrapped in their thick cloaks, for the night air was cold. They spoke of many things—of the great crowds of people now in Bethlehem; of the birth of a son to Zacharias, the high priest; of the great hope of a Deliverer that was in many hearts.

A little way off, just visible, stood the motionless figure of another shepherd. He took no part in their talk, for he was on guard, watching and listening lest a thief might creep up to the fold, or a prowling beast come from the desert in search of prey.

Suddenly the night became light about them; the stars seemed to fade and their firelight to die before this brilliant light. It was the glory of heaven that shone round about them, and these simple men were sore afraid.

As they bowed themselves before this glory, a voice spoke to them words of comfort and of peace. "Fear not," it said, "for I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord. This shall be a sign unto you: you shall find the Babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger."

Then the light around them grew brighter and brighter, filling the whole sky with glory, and from the heavens broke forth a song of joy: "Glory to God in the highest, on earth peace, goodwill toward men." So sang the angel host as they sped across the sky.

Bewildered, the shepherds spoke in whispers together. "Come," they said, "let us go to Bethlehem, and see this thing which has come to pass." Taking gifts to present to the new-born Child, the shepherds hurried to the sleeping town, and there in the stable they found Mary and Joseph and the little Child.

Kneeling before Him, their hearts melted in tenderness and love; then with great joy they went forth and published abroad the good tidings through all the countryside.

THE INFANT JESUS AND THE SHEPHERDS.

53. THE WISE MEN OF THE EAST

LONG ago, in a far-off Eastern land, stood a great and wonderful temple. It shone with rich and beautiful colours, and was adorned with precious stones. The priests of the temple were wise and holy men, who sought to know and worship the God of beauty, purity, and truth. They bowed in worship before the glory of the sun, the purity of fire, and the beauty of the stars; for to them these spoke of the power, the might, and the will of God.

One night these Wise Men saw two great planets draw together. In deepening wonder they watched, until at length they saw them meet, and then a great new star shot forth into the sky. "This can have no other meaning than the birth of a great king," they said one to another.

Diligently they searched their books of wisdom. "The star shines in the sign of the Hebrews!" one exclaimed. "Surely this is the star of Him who should be born King of the Jews. Come, let us go and pay our homage to Him, for He may be the messenger of the Most High God."

So these Wise Men set forth on a long journey, and at length one morning, in the grey dawn, they reached the city of Jerusalem. None there could tell them aught of this new King. The only king they knew was Herod, and his palace stood there on the hill.

So to King Herod the Wise Men went, and told the story of their search. Fear came upon his guilty heart, for he knew he ruled only by force and not by love, and if a new King should arise the people would follow Him.

The Scriptures were searched, and the Wise Men were told that the promised King should be born in Bethlehem, so once more they rode forth, and toward evening these strange figures entered the quiet little city. Their guiding star still shone forth in all its brilliance, leading them to a humble cottage. There they entered in and found a little Baby in His mother's arms. There was no doubt this Child must be the King, so, bending low before Him, they paid their homage, and presented their gifts of gold and sweet perfumes.

Kneeling before that little Child, they prayed that God's kingdom might come—that kingdom they sought of beauty, purity, and truth.

THE WISE MEN OF THE EAST.

54. THE FLIGHT INTO EGYPT

N the morning, when the Wise Men came to take farewell of Mary and Joseph, they told how they had been warned in a dream not to return to Herod the king at Jerusalem, and in obedience to this warning they departed into their own country by another way.

All that day a shadow of anxiety lay on Joseph's heart. The Wise Men had spoken of Mary's Child as a king. The whisper of such a word would be enough to arouse the jealousy of Herod, and then all peace and safety would be gone.

The day passed and, still anxious, Joseph lay down to sleep. In a dream of the night he learned that his fears were true, for the angel of the Lord stood by him, saying, " Arise, take the Child and His mother, and flee into Egypt, for Herod will seek the Child to destroy Him."

In a moment Joseph was wide awake. Quickly he arose, and rousing Mary from her sleep, told her of his fears and of his dream. " It is a warning from God for our safety," said Mary. " Let us make ready to go."

Very quickly and quietly they gathered together their belongings. Joseph slipped out and saddled the donkey, and when he came back Mary was all ready, wrapped in her warm cloak, holding her Baby close to her that the night air might not harm Him.

It was still dark, and Joseph's lantern threw strange shadows as he walked quickly by the side of the donkey which bore so precious a burden. Soon Bethlehem was left behind, and they were hastening south to Hebron.

Every step of that journey spoke to Joseph of the past, and of the patient way in which God had guided His people when they had left Egypt to settle in Canaan.

At length the frontier was reached, and once in the land of Egypt they were safe. Strange sights met the eyes of these simple folk from Nazareth. Here they found a splendour and a grandeur of which they had never even dreamed. In the cities were temples and palaces, while away in the distance stood the pyramids, those mountains of stone where rested Egypt's great and mighty dead. Yet in the arms of this village maiden lay One whose power was to be greater than all the power of Egypt—whose kingdom should know no end, for His was the Kingdom of God.

THE FLIGHT INTO EGYPT.

55. THE BOYHOOD OF JESUS

HEN Mary and Joseph left Egypt Jesus was no longer a Baby. He was older now, and able to run part of the way by His mother's side. At length they came back again to their old home in Nazareth, where Joseph opened his workshop once more and plied his trade as a carpenter.

As Jesus grew bigger His happy, sunny disposition made Him a favourite with everybody. Morning and evening He would go with His mother to the well, at first carrying the empty water-jar to help her, and then when He grew stronger He would delight to carry it home full.

Sometimes Joseph had work to do for farms round Nazareth, and Jesus loved when He was allowed to go with him to these farms. Full of joy He would scamper over the green hill slopes, stopping to caress the flowers that glowed amidst the grass. With sharp eyes He noted the ways of birds and beasts. Often He would watch the patient oxen drawing the plough across the fields, and He would think how well their yokes must fit if they were not to chafe and hurt.

When schooldays came Jesus went to the synagogue school in Nazareth. There He learned the history of His people, and came to know the heroes of bygone days. There, too, He learned those passages from the Law which every Jew must write upon his heart. But perhaps Jesus liked best to learn the beautiful words written by the Hebrew poets and prophets, which told of the goodness and mercy of God. These words He liked to think about when He went to the synagogue on the Sabbath days, there to praise and worship God, His Father in heaven.

Jesus would spend much time in Joseph's shop, mastering the use of one tool after another, and learning to understand the different kinds of wood used by a carpenter.

As Joseph grew old he would be glad to lay the heavier burden on the strong, young shoulders of Jesus. Thus He who had been hailed as a king became a village carpenter.

THE BOYHOOD OF JESUS.

56. THE BOY JESUS IN THE TEMPLE

THE time of the Passover was drawing near, and Joseph and Jesus were very busy finishing their work before they closed their shop to go to Jerusalem. Jesus was now twelve years of age, and He was looking forward to His first visit to Jerusalem with great expectations. At length the great day dawned, and the little party set out on their journey.

On the fourth day a hush fell on the pilgrims as they crossed the Mount of Olives and the Holy City burst upon their sight. There it stood high upon its hill—the Temple crowning all, gleaming white and gold in the sunshine.

There was much in Jerusalem to interest the Boy from Nazareth, but it was to the Temple He was chiefly drawn. Day after day He sought its courts, fascinated first by its beauty, and then by its message of the near presence of God. Strange new thoughts began to stir in Jesus' mind—thoughts He did not understand, but which He wanted to talk about. One day He crept up to a little group of rabbis who were teaching in the Temple courts. Hours slipped away unnoticed as He listened to what they said. He came away very thoughtful, for there were many things that puzzled Him.

When He reached the house where they had been staying, He learned that Mary and Joseph had left for Nazareth, thinking, no doubt, that He was somewhere in the company. There was no use in following them that night, so early next morning Jesus was again listening to the teaching of the rabbis in the Temple. The rabbis entered into talk with Him, and all who heard the talk were astonished at the understanding He showed in the questions He asked, and at the wisdom of the answers to the questions they put to Him.

Toward evening there burst into the group an anxious, almost distracted woman—it was Mary. "Son," she said, as she caught hold of Jesus, "why have you dealt thus with us? Behold, your father and I have been seeking you these three days."—"Mother," answered Jesus gently, "you need not have been anxious about Me, for you know I love to be within My Father's house."

THE BOY JESUS IN THE TEMPLE.

57. JOHN THE BAPTIST

HILE Jesus had been growing up in Nazareth, plying His trade as a carpenter, His cousin John, son of Zacharias the high priest, had also been growing up in Jerusalem. John was very different from Jesus. He had none of that radiant joy which so endeared the Son of Mary to people's hearts. John was quiet and studious, a deep thinker, who looked with searching, brooding eyes upon the evils he saw in the world all around.

The books which John loved most to study were the writings of the prophets who had sought to teach the people about God. As he grew older, John read more and more deeply into their thoughts, until he came to feel that he himself was one of them; for Zacharias had told him that he should be a prophet of the Highest—a forerunner going before the Lord to prepare His ways.

Thinking of his high calling, John withdrew from Jerusalem and, like some of the prophets of old, went into the lonely desert, that God might there reveal to him His message. Giving up all ease and comfort, there John lived a hard life. His only companions were the few herdsmen that led their flocks that way to pasture. He wore a cloak made of rough camel's hair, bound with a girdle of leather, while his food was of the simplest—the locusts and wild honey of the desert.

At length his message came to him. From the wilderness his voice rang out : " Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. Arise, prepare ye the way of the Lord, for the crooked must be made straight, and the rough places smooth."

Quickly the news spread of this strange prophet and his burning message, and before long crowds were making their way to the desert places beyond Jordan. Men and women, rich and poor, traders, tax-gatherers, soldiers, scribes and Pharisees, were in the throng. To all the message was the same : " Repent, and show your repentance by your deeds, for the day of testing is at hand."

Many were impressed by the words of John, and asked him, " Are you the promised Christ ? "—" Nay," he cried, " I only prepare His way. There will come after me One mightier than I, the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to unloose."

That mighty One, we know, was Jesus of Nazareth.

JOHN THE BAPTIST.

58. THE MARRIAGE AT CANA

FROM beyond Jordan, where Jesus had gone to meet John the preacher of the wilderness, He set out for Galilee again, accompanied by His friends Simon and Andrew and Philip.

Towards sunset, on the third day, they drew near to the little town of Cana, which stood high on the hills beyond Nazareth. There was great excitement in the town, for a wedding feast was being held to which Jesus and His friends had been invited.

The bride and bridegroom have been adorned by their friends, and very beautiful is the little bride in her white dress, embroidered in gold and silver. On her head she wears a crown, and she is very proud of her girdle, for it is all finely embroidered. Many, many hours of loving work have gone to make it ready for this glad day.

Now that they are wedded, the marriage feast begins with great joy and gladness. Of all the guests none is more welcome than the Lord Jesus, for always where He is happiness is made deeper and more true.

Mary, the mother of Jesus, is also at the feast ; she is helping to look after the guests. After a while she comes up quietly to Jesus, an anxious look upon her face. " Son," she says, " the wine is finished ; they have no more to set before the guests." Many a time in her own home Mary had sought Jesus' help when she was in trouble, so now she hopes that He will help her friends. " Mother," he answered, " mine hour has not yet come."

Mary did not understand what Jesus meant, but she was quite sure that He would help, so to those who served she said, " Whatever Jesus tells you to do, do it."

After a little Jesus moved to the door, where stood a number of jars, which had held water for the guests to use as they arrived. " Fill the water-pots with water," said Jesus, and they filled them to the brim. " Now draw out," He said, " and take of it to the steward of the feast."

When they had done so, the steward exclaimed, " Why, most people set forth their best wine at the beginning of the feast, but you have kept your best until the end."

So Jesus added to the joy of that wedding both by His own gladness and by His help.

THE MARRIAGE AT CANA.

59. A NOBLEMAN SEEKS JESUS

IN the city of Capernaum, on the shore of the Sea of Galilee, there lived long ago a little boy with his father and mother. They lived in a very beautiful house, for the father was a rich man, a nobleman at the court of the king.

Down by the water's edge the little boy loved to watch the ships go sailing by. There were the fishing boats that belonged to Capernaum ; then there were the merchant ships that sailed from port to port ; but best of all were the gorgeous pleasure boats that used to sail to and from Tiberias.

One day the little lad fell ill. His brow was hot and throbbing, his tongue was parched, and his whole body was aching. Wise physicians came, but they could help very little, and the child grew worse and worse. The father, in the midst of his anxiety, remembered that he had heard of a young Man who, they said, wrought wondrous cures. It might be that He could save the child.

Hurrying through Capernaum, he asked of one and another whom he met where this Jesus might be found, and learned that He was in the village of Cana, more than twenty miles away. Saddling his horse, the nobleman set out with all speed and rode up through the hills, with no thought in his mind except the illness of his child. On reaching Cana he handed over his steaming horse to the care of a stable-boy, and hurried off in search of the Lord Jesus.

" Sir," said the nobleman, when he had found Him, " my little son lies very ill ; come with me, I pray you, to Capernaum and heal him. Only come, before my child dies." As Jesus looked upon this nobleman He saw how he loved his child. " Go in peace," He said, " your son is well." At these words a great comfort stole into that father's heart, for he had looked into the eyes of Jesus and knew that he could trust Him.

Next day, as he rode homewards, some of his servants came out to meet him. " Oh, sir," they cried, " your son is well again." Then the little boy himself came rushing out. " Daddy, daddy," he was shouting, " see, I am all better again. I began to get better yesterday at one o'clock."—" Yes," said his daddy, " that was just when I was telling Jesus about you. Now come, all of you, and I shall tell you about Him." So that whole household became friends of the Lord Jesus.

A NOBLEMAN SEEKS JESUS.

60. AT THE POOL OF BETHESDA

IT was feast-time in Jerusalem, and the city was thronged with people who had come from many parts to offer sacrifices unto God. Weary of all the noise and jostling in the Temple courts, and busy with His own thoughts, the Lord Jesus made His way beyond the city wall until He came to a broad flight of steps leading to a pool of reddish-coloured water.

As He descended these steps a sad sight met His eyes, for there, gathered underneath the surrounding arches, lay multitudes of people, all sick and ill, suffering from diseases of every kind.

Quietly He passed along, pausing now and then to look in sympathy upon these sufferers; but none paid any heed to Him, for every eye was fixed upon the pool. They watched intently, for there was a belief that at certain times an angel came and troubled the water, giving it such power that the first to enter it thereafter was certain of a cure. How dreadful it would be, thought Jesus, to see all these sick folk pushing and scrambling to reach the pool.

Just then His eyes lighted on the face of a man who was lying helpless on his mat. On this man's face there was no look of expectancy. He stared blankly before him as if he had no hope.

Jesus went and stood behind him for a while, and then He spoke. "How long have you been coming here, my friend?" He asked.

"Every time for nearly forty years when the waters are to be troubled I have been brought and laid here," the man replied; "but it's no good, I shall never get better."

"Do you *want* to be made well?" Jesus asked.

The man replied. "I have no one to lift me in when the water rises. The others always get there first."

In tones of quiet power Jesus spoke again. "Rise," He said, "take up your bed and walk." Filled with a new desire for life, the man put forth all his power and found the strength to rise—to stand—to walk.

AT THE POOL OF BETHESDA.

61. IN THE SYNAGOGUE AT CAPERNAUM

IT was a Sabbath morning in Capernaum. Stillness reigned in the city. No boats were to be seen on the lake, the market-place was deserted, no caravans of camels made their way along the dusty roads, no sound was heard in any workshop, for the Law commanded that the Sabbath day should be kept holy.

Towards the hour of worship little groups of people began to make their way to the synagogue. From a fisherman's house down by the shore came three young men. They were Peter and Andrew, who were fishermen, and Jesus of Nazareth, their new Friend.

Peter was a proud man that day. He was proud that this new Friend, whom he admired so much, had come to stay in his house, and he was proud to be taking Him to the famous synagogue of Capernaum—perhaps the most beautiful in all the land. He was excited too, for he was hoping Jesus would be asked to take some part in the service that day.

The synagogue was full, and the service went on as usual until the leader beckoned to Jesus to read and speak to the people. How pleased Peter was ! There was a rustling sound as people turned to see this Stranger, and asked each other who He was ; but no sooner had Jesus begun to read than an almost breathless stillness fell upon the congregation.

The words He read they had heard many times before, but to-day they were filled with a new meaning. Then, as He went on to speak, the stillness grew and grew as the people listened to the words of truth and life which they were hearing now for the first time.

All of a sudden the silence was broken as a poor demented creature came rushing forward, screaming at the pitch of his voice. In confusion people drew back from this wild, tormented soul, for they feared what he might do. But Jesus spoke to him in accents strong with love and power, and lo ! when the fit had passed, they found him calm and quiet, his mind restored to health.

Every one was amazed at the wisdom and the power of this new Teacher, whose fame spread abroad through all the region round about.

IN THE SYNAGOGUE AT CAPERNAUM.

62. THE WONDERFUL HEALER

THE story of that morning's service in the synagogue was repeated and repeated throughout all Capernaum, and even beyond the city. With the story of healing there crept into many a heart a great new hope. Sufferers who thought they were beyond all help were filled with the desire to meet this Jesus, while there was scarcely a single person who did not think of some one to whom this news would bring great hope and expectation.

The day wore on toward evening, and now in the sunset hour the lake was touched to gold. As the shadows grew longer Peter began to be aware of a quiet, almost stealthy, movement all around his house. Now and again he thought he heard the sound of hurried footsteps and subdued whisperings.

Wondering, he opened the door to look out, and there an amazing sight met his bewildered gaze. His courtyard was full of people—not only so, but crowds stretched right down to the water's edge as far as he could see—while every road leading to the shore was thronged with people. It seemed to Peter that the whole city was gathered round his door.

After his first astonishment had passed, he looked at the crowd more closely, and then he began to understand why they had come. There were rich and poor in that crowd, old and young, but they were all drawn together by a common need—the need of health and strength.

Before him Peter saw mothers with their babies, lame people hobbling along on crutches, the paralysed carried on couches, the blind being led by friends, besides many who were sick and suffering from divers diseases, while some with clouded minds were held back by strong hands.

Just then every eye was raised and fixed upon the face of Jesus, who appeared in the doorway. To Him the beseeching look in every face was a prayer, a cry for help, a call upon His love. And so His love, His sympathy, His strength were poured forth upon that crowd.

Moving in and out amongst them, listening to all their needs, Jesus worked well into the night, until every one had received the health he came to seek. What a wonderful night of rejoicing that was ! Lifelong sorrows and unspoken fears had been removed, and joy and gladness reigned in every home.

THE WONDERFUL HEALER.

63. A GREAT DRAUGHT OF FISHES

AS darkness falls over the Galilean lake, the fishing boats slip out one by one, their flickering lights reflected in the water. The nets are thrown out, but to-night they hang limp and empty. Moving to another part the fishermen try again, but with the same result. This is one of their weary nights, when the hours drag slowly past, and the morning comes to mock all their fruitless toil.

Tired and disappointed, they drew into the harbour in the morning. Before long Jesus arrived at the shore, followed by a crowd of people. Seating himself in Simon's boat, so that all could hear Him, Jesus began to teach —the fishermen listening, while they washed and mended their nets.

At length Jesus turned to his friends. " Launch out into the deep," He said, and in a moment they were pulling out over the lake. " Now," said Jesus, " let down your nets for a good catch."—" What," exclaimed Simon, " let down our nets in the daytime ! That would be no use. We have been out all night and caught nothing." Something in Jesus' look told Simon He meant to be obeyed, so he added, " Nevertheless at your word I will let down the net."

Scarcely had the net been sunk, when the ropes strained and pulled. This meant indeed a shoal of fish. Surprised and excited, Simon and Andrew begin to draw up the net ; but it is too heavy for them—it is almost breaking. John and James, their partners, are called to help, and when the net is landed there are enough fish to fill both boats.

Now that all the excitement is over, Simon looks long at the quiet figure of Jesus sitting in the boat. Now he sees Him, not only as a Friend, but as One who has a power and a will that are supreme—while he, a poor fisherman, had sought to stand against them.

Of a sudden all Simon's pride left him, and falling on his knees before Jesus he called out, " Depart from me, O Lord, for I am a sinful man."—" Fear not, Simon," came the voice of Jesus, " for henceforth I want you to be *My* fisherman, and to go out in search of men."

So these simple fishermen became the disciples of Jesus, and when they came to land they left their boats and followed Him.

A GREAT DRAUGHT OF FISHES.

64. THE MAN WITH THE FOUR FRIENDS

FOR many days, after that wonderful Sabbath in Capernaum, crowds came seeking the Lord Jesus; but He had gone away into the smaller villages, there to preach His gospel of good news.

At length it was noised abroad one day that He had returned to Capernaum and that He was in a certain house. Like wildfire the news spread through the city, and as it spread a steady stream of people began to flow towards the house where He was said to be.

Meanwhile, in a dark, dingy little house by the roadside, there lay a man who was paralysed. Many a time, as he lay there helpless, he thought of the health he used to have, and of the foolish way in which he had misused it. "If only I could get another chance," he thought, "how differently I should spend my days!"

Just then the door was thrown open, and four strong, stalwart men stood there in the shaft of light which entered the dingy room. "Come along," they said to him, "Jesus has come back to Capernaum, and we have come to take you to Him."

"But how are you going to get *me* there?" the sick man asked. "Carry you, of course," his friends replied, and in a moment each one had seized a corner of his mat and the journey to Capernaum had begun.

With all possible speed they made their way to the house; but alas, when they arrived there, they found the crowd so great that it was impossible to get in. They were desperately anxious to bring their friend to Jesus. What were they to do? "I know," said one. "Let's get up on to the roof. You make a hole just above where Jesus is, and I'll get ropes so that we can lower our patient to His feet."

Round about Jesus were a number of scribes and Pharisees, who looked up in surprise when plaster began to fall upon them from the roof; but when Jesus looked up He saw only the great faith and great love in the faces of these friends as they lowered the paralytic to His feet. So He healed him both in body and in soul. "Son," He said, "your sins are forgiven you. Arise, take up your bed and go your way." And as he went forth, cured, the people joined in glorifying God.

THE MAN WITH THE FOUR FRIENDS.

65. THE SOWER

ONE day when the Lord Jesus was in Capernaum He went out by the seashore. Soon people began to gather round Him, eager to hear what He had to say. Gradually the crowd grew bigger and bigger, until the whole shore was covered with people.

There were many different kinds of people in that crowd. There were some who knew the Lord Jesus and loved Him, but there were others who joined the crowd just out of curiosity; they cared nothing for Jesus, nor for what He said. Some came just because they liked the excitement of a crowd, and some were enemies who came to find fault.

Looking round for a place from which to speak to this great crowd, Jesus entered a fishing boat, and pushed out a little way into the water.

As He looked upon that crowd, He saw all the different kinds of folk, for He could read not only their faces, but their thoughts. Then, as He raised His eyes to the fields beyond the lake, Jesus saw there a sight which rejoiced His heart. It was a sower, sowing his precious seed. Through his field he strode, flinging his seed to right and left into the furrows that had been prepared. The breeze was blowing fresh, and birds were wheeling round his head. Through the field ran a pathway, trodden hard by passers-by, and some of the ground was stony, and some was full of thorn bushes.

"That sower's task and Mine are much the same," thought the Lord Jesus; and thinking thus, He turned to the people and told them this story:

"Behold," He said, "a sower once went forth to sow, and as he sowed, some of his seed fell on the footpath, and the birds of the air swooped down and devoured it. Some seed fell on stony ground, where it had not much depth of earth; there it sprang up quickly, but soon withered away again. Some fell among thorns, and they sprang up and choked the young green shoots. But some seed fell on good ground, and it grew to harvest, bringing forth a goodly crop.

"He that hath ears to hear, let him hear," said the Lord Jesus, and as people went home thinking over that simple story they began to realize that perhaps it had a meaning deeper than they had thought at first.

THE SOWER.

66. JESUS STILLING THE STORM

IT had been a long tiring day in Capernaum. Since early morning the crowds had thronged round Jesus, and now, weary and longing for quiet, He asked Peter to set sail for the other side of the lake, where the great lonely spaces promised peace.

In a moment the sail was hoisted and the boat put out to sea. Making His way to the stern, Jesus leant His head on the steersman's seat and was soon fast asleep. In silence the fishermen steered the boat ; no word was spoken lest they might disturb their Master's rest. Darkness had fallen now ; twinkling lights appeared along the western shore, but on the other side the darkness was unbroken.

There had been a fiery glow in the sky that night as the sun went down. Peter feared it boded ill, but he hoped to reach the farther shore before any danger threatened.

The wind had turned cold and was blowing in fierce gusts down the ravines that bordered on the lake. Of a sudden there is a blinding flash of lightning, revealing the inky blackness of the sky and sea, and the angry waves that leap about the boat. Then the storm breaks. The sea is lashed to fury. The waves rise in their might and toss the boat as if it were a leaf.

Through all the noise and rattle of the storm Jesus sleeps on. The boat heels this way and that, and the great waves break over it with a crash. Many a storm has Peter weathered, but never one so bad as this. Still they battle on, until there is a wrenching noise. Something has given way. The boat fills with water and begins to sink. Now in terror they turn to their Master. " Master, Master," they cry, " carest Thou not that we perish ? "

Jesus had heard nothing of the storm, but He hears their cry for help. Awake in a moment, He rises to His feet in the stern of the boat. There He stands, torn by the wind and drenched with spray. Then above the hiss of the storm His voice rings out : " Peace. Be still."

The wind mutters away to silence, the waves swing themselves to rest, and there is a great calm. " What manner of Man is this," the disciples ask one of another, " that even the winds and the waves obey Him ? "

JESUS STILLING THE STORM.

67. JAIRUS' DAUGHTER

ALL night long the lights had burned in Jairus' house in Capernaum, for there in a quiet room he and his wife were sitting by the couch of their daughter, watching her precious life ebbing slowly away.

Suddenly they heard the roar and tumult of a storm. The wind went rushing round the house like some wild thing, and the rain lashed down in fury. Then as suddenly again all was calm.

" Strange," thought Jairus. Then he remembered how in the synagogue one day at the word of Jesus a poor storm-tossed, demented man found peace. " Jesus ! " he thought, " He could heal my child. Why did I never think of Him before ? "

As soon as it was day Jairus made his way into the city. Hurrying on, he came to the seashore, and there, pulling quickly to land, was the boat with Jesus and His friends. A crowd was waiting, for there were many anxious hearts in Capernaum that day ; but through all the crowd Jairus made his way, and throwing himself at the feet of Jesus, besought Him to come and save his little daughter, for she was nigh unto death.

Jesus turns at once to go with him, but a great crowd is following, jostling them on every side. It is impossible to hurry through the narrow streets, and Jairus is nearly mad with impatience and anxiety. " The crowds could wait," he thought, " but if we delay my daughter may be dead."

Just then a messenger pushed his way through to Jairus. " Trouble the Master no more," he said, " for your daughter is dead." Jesus heard the news and saw how Jairus seemed to bend beneath the blow. " Be not afraid," He said to him ; " go on believing."

At length they reached the home of Jairus. Already the mourners were there, but Jesus turned them out. " The child is not dead," He said, " she is only sleeping." But they laughed Him to scorn. Then, going into the room where the child lay, Jesus took her by the hand and said to her—just as her mother might have done any morning—" Little girl, it is time to rise."

Her hand began to grip the hand of Jesus, then she opened her eyes as if she were waking from a great, deep sleep, and she looked up into the strong, loving face of Jesus.

JAIRUS' DAUGHTER.

68. THE FEEDING OF THE FIVE THOUSAND

IT was almost dark one night when a young lad went rushing along one of the roads in Capernaum and burst into his mother's house. "O mother, listen," he cried; "I have had such a wonderful day!

"I went down by the shore this morning, and was playing with some other boys. A crowd came, waiting, I think, to see the Lord Jesus. All at once we heard gasps of disappointment, for they had caught sight of Him crossing with His friends over to the other side.

"We did not pay much attention at first, but in a little we found the shore deserted and saw a great stream of people hurrying as fast as they could round by the hill road towards the other side. Of course we had to follow, so we ran and soon made up on them. There were all kinds of folk there, many of them strangers, pilgrims on their way to the Passover.

"At length we arrived at the other side. *Thousands* of people had gathered round the Lord Jesus. I never saw such crowds of people. All day He went in and out amongst them. Sometimes I was quite near, and saw how kindly He listened when they told Him of their troubles and their needs, and how quick He was to help.

"All sorts of suffering folk He cured—somehow strength and power seemed to flow from Him. Sometimes He spoke to us, and then a great love looked out from His eyes.

"The day wore on and the people began to get weary. Then the most wonderful thing happened. Andrew, the fisherman, you know, one of Jesus' friends, came to me and said, 'You have some food with you, my lad, haven't you? Will you give it to the Master?'—'Why, of course,' I said.

"Then he took me to Jesus, and I put into His hands the five barley scones and the two fishes that you had given me. Oh, I was proud to be able to help Him!

"I don't know how Jesus did it, but He kept on giving from my little store of food until all the people were fed. Then, with hearts full of thankfulness and joy, they made their way back again to Capernaum.

"I love the Lord Jesus so much, mother, that I want to help Him again," the boy said later.

"I am sure you will, my son," his mother said.

THE FEEDING OF THE FIVE THOUSAND.

69. JESUS TEACHING HIS DISCIPLES TO PRAY

FROM the other side of the lake throngs of people were making their way back to Capernaum. There was wonder in the minds of all, for they had been guests of the Lord Jesus, and had received food broken by His hands and blessed by His spirit.

Meanwhile a few remained, talking excitedly together. Here, they thought, was a Leader who could oppose the might of Rome and save their country. So they came and would have laid hold on Jesus to take Him by force to Jerusalem and make Him King.

For a moment sorrow and pain swept over Jesus' face, then He turned quickly and strode into the utter loneliness of the hills. All night the disciples waited, but He did not return. A storm raged through the hills, a storm of driving wind and rain, but these mattered not to that lonely Figure, deep in thought, away on the rugged mountain-top.

Peter remembered finding Jesus once before alone amongst the hills, and he knew that for his Master this night of storm was a night of prayer. In the morning Jesus returned calm and strong with the strength of a spirit at peace with God.

Greatly desiring to share with their Master His secret source of strength, the disciples came to Jesus, saying, " Lord, teach us to pray ; " and there, out on the green hillside, with the lake shimmering in the distance, Jesus shared with His followers the most precious thing in all His life.

" When ye pray," said Jesus, " do not use long words and high-sounding phrases, but in the silence of your hearts seek the very presence of God Himself ; then speak to Him of all your needs simply, as children to a father.

" When ye pray, ask that God's name may be held in reverence by men, that His kingdom may come, and that His will may be done on earth. Ask from Him your daily bread, for from His hands it comes. Pray that your sins may be forgiven, and that you may be brought to forgive those who have done you wrong. Ask, too, His strength in times of temptation, and His deliverance from evil. So will you bring your hearts and minds into the peace and love of God."

The prayer that Jesus taught His disciples is still our most precious prayer to-day.

JESUS TEACHING HIS DISCIPLES TO PRAY.

70. JESUS GIVES SIGHT TO THE BLIND

IN Jerusalem there lived a man who had been born blind. All his life he had lived in darkness. He had never seen the blue of the sky nor the beauty of a green tree. He could smell the flowers and feel with his fingers the softness of their petals, but he had never known the joy of seeing their glowing colours in the grass. In these olden times no one knew how to teach blind people to work, so there was nothing that this poor man could do but sit by the wayside and beg from the passers-by.

It happened one day as he was sitting in one of the streets of Jerusalem that he heard some people approaching. His ears were so quick and so well trained that he could judge from the sound of the voice what kind of person was coming. He liked the sound of these people. As they came nearer he thought they must be talking about him, for he caught the words " born blind."

Then he heard a voice such as he had never heard before. Its tones thrilled him like fine music. " I am the Light of the World," he heard. " Light ! " he thought. " The one great gift I am denied."

The little party stopped near by. The blind man felt gentle hands smearing something over his poor sightless eyes ; then he heard that voice once more, saying, " Go, wash your eyes in the Pool of Siloam."

In a moment he had seized his stick and was hurrying on his way to the pool. He did not know what to expect, but a great hope filled his heart. Having reached the pool, he laid his stick on the ground, and, kneeling down, washed the ointment from his eyes. Then—wonder of wonders !—his hope was realized : he was blind no more, his eyes were opened, and for the first time in his life he knew what it was to see !

Almost crazy with joy, he made his way back to the city. People turned and looked at him as he passed, for they were not sure who he was. " Is not this the blind beggar ? " some asked. They were all so puzzled that nobody could tell.

" Yes," said the man himself, " I am the beggar who was blind, but this day I have received my sight at the hands of Him whom they call Jesus."

JESUS GIVES SIGHT TO THE BLIND.

71. THE GOOD SHEPHERD

JOEL'S father was a shepherd. While Joel was still a little boy he watched his father, and so learned quite a lot about shepherding. He used to go with his father in the morning and listen as he called his sheep out from the fold. He knew each one by name, and called them gently to him.

Joel wondered how his father knew them, for to him all sheep seemed alike, but gradually he came to know first one and then another. Sometimes he tried to call them out, but the sheep just got frightened and would not come, because they did not know his voice, and they would follow no other than their own shepherd.

Sometimes Joel's father did not come home all night, and then his mother told him that he was looking after the lambs or protecting the flock from thieves that might come in the night, or from attack by wild beasts.

" Suppose a lion came ? " Joel questioned, his eyes very large. " Then," said his mother, " your father would fight the lion to protect his sheep. The good shepherd would even die to save his flock." After that Joel thought shepherds must be very brave, and must love their sheep very much to die for them.

One night, as the sheep filed past into the fold, Joel's father noticed that there was one amissing. Leaving the others all safe, he went away back over the road he had come, looking for his one lost sheep. Darkness fell, but still he went on searching and calling, until at last he heard a faint cry in response. Then how glad he was to find his poor wandering sheep, and with what joy he carried it back to the fold !

One Sabbath, Joel went to the synagogue with his father. He grasped his father's hand and looked up with a smile when he heard these words : " He shall feed His flock like a shepherd. He shall gather the lambs with His arms, and carry them in His bosom."—" That's just like you, daddy," he whispered.

When they went home, Joel's father told him that God loved His people just as a shepherd loves his flock, and that the Lord Jesus had come to tell people of that love, which would protect them from danger, seek them when lost, and stand between them and every foe. For He said, " I am the Good Shepherd, and I lay down My life for the sheep."

THE GOOD SHEPHERD.

72. THE GOOD SAMARITAN

ONE day, near the city of Jericho, a very proud rabbi came to ask Jesus questions, hoping to draw Him into an argument. " Tell me, who is my neighbour ? " he asked.

This was Jesus' answer :

" Once upon a time," He said, " a man was going from Jerusalem to Jericho." Everybody in the crowd knew that road well, and shivered even now as they remembered its dangers ; for the rocks on each side were full of caves, where robbers lurked.

" And as he went," continued the Lord Jesus, " he was attacked by thieves, who stripped him of his raiment, robbed him, wounded him, and departed, leaving him half dead. There he lay in the blazing sun. By-and-by a priest came past from the Holy Temple in Jerusalem. ' He is sure to help me,' thought the man ; but the priest just glanced at him, and swept by on the other side of the road.

" Later, a Levite came that way, also from the Holy Temple. He crossed and looked at the man, but with a look of disgust upon his face he too turned away and passed by.

" Again, a good deal later, it must have been toward evening, the man heard the sharp trot-trot of a donkey. ' This must be a merchant,' he thought ; ' not much hope of him helping me if priests pass me by.' The trot-trot ceased ; some one bent over him ; kindly hands raised him from the ground. Words of sympathy and comfort reached his ears, then he opened his eyes and looked right into the face of a friend—and that friend was a Samaritan !

" Very gently the Samaritan cleaned and dressed the poor man's wounds, and setting him on his own beast, led the way slowly down the road until they came to an inn. There he attended to him kindly, and on the morrow, when he left, he gave money to the landlord, telling him to provide everything his friend might need, and if he spent more it would be repaid on his return.

" Now," said Jesus, turning to the rabbi, " which of these three was neighbour unto him who fell among the thieves ? " There was no doubt as to the answer. " Go and do likewise," then said Jesus, " and you will know who is your neighbour."

So the proud rabbi left the presence of Jesus a wiser and a humbler man.

THE GOOD SAMARITAN.

73. THE TWO SISTERS

IN the sweet little village of Bethany, which lay sheltered by the Mount of Olives, not far from Jerusalem, there was a home in which Jesus loved to stay. It was the home of two sisters, Martha and Mary, and their brother Lazarus.

Jesus loved the silvery olive trees that covered the hill slopes with their quiet beauty, the lofty date palms that swayed gently in the breeze, and the fruit trees clothed in their fair, sweet loveliness. There in the cool, quiet places Jesus used to walk, sometimes alone, sometimes in deep talk with Lazarus, His friend.

Now it was toward feast-time in Jerusalem, and Jesus was expected to stay in Bethany on His way thither. Martha is all excitement. Although everything is ready she cannot sit still. Again and again she goes to look along the road, so eager is she to welcome Jesus to her home. At length the crowds tell her He is coming, and with great joy she goes out to meet Him whom she loved and cared for more than she could say.

Immediately Jesus is overwhelmed with questions about His comfort. He answers with a smile, for He knows how the loving heart of Martha will never let her rest. And now, when He is settled in her house, she begins to bustle about, getting ready the meal which she has planned for His sake.

" He goes hungry too often," she would say to herself. " I must give Him all sorts of special dishes when He is here." So, in her love, she attempts to do more than she can really manage.

Meanwhile Mary has crept near to Jesus, and there she sits, with no thoughts for any one else in the whole world. She loves to share His thoughts, and to speak with Him about the deep mysterious things of life.

Martha's bustling footsteps break the quiet of their talk. Flushed and excited, at length she interrupts. " Master," she says, " my sister has left me to serve alone ; tell her to come and help me. I have too much to do."

" Martha, Martha," says Jesus very gently, with a loving smile in His eyes, " why do you prepare so much ? One simple dish would be enough, and you would be less troubled. What Mary has chosen will not pass away."

THE TWO SISTERS.

74. THE UNFRIENDLY NEIGHBOUR

ONE day Jesus was speaking to the people about prayer, and in order that they might understand He told them a story.

Evening had settled down on a certain village. The work of the day was over. Doors were closed and families gathered together round the lamp that lighted all the house. In one home the mother sat mending her children's clothes, telling them, at the same time, hero tales of long ago. They caused her a great deal of work, these children, yet she was glad because they were strong and healthy.

" There, you've eaten every crumb of bread again," she said, when supper was over that night. " Some of you will have to get up early in the morning and help to grind the flour and heat the oven before I can make more." Promises of help were quickly given, and before long the whole family were lying asleep on their mats.

In the middle of the night there came a great knocking at the door. Surely something must be far wrong for any one to come at such an hour. Hurrying to open the door, the father found there a friend, weary and tired, for he had come a long way. Bidding his friend welcome, he called to his wife to set food before him. Then it was with dismay that she realized she had no bread to give her guest.

The father took a lantern in his hand and hurried away to another house to ask for help. " Friend," he cried, when he had at length received an answer to his knocking, " lend me some bread. A friend has come to me on a journey, and I have no bread to set before him."

" Go away and don't trouble me," came the answer. " We are all in bed here ; I cannot rise and give you bread without disturbing all the house." But the man was anxious for his friend's needs, so again and again he went on asking, until at length his neighbour rose and gave him all he wanted, that he might be left in peace.

" Now," said Jesus, " if a surly neighbour will grant his friend's request just because he goes on asking, think how much more readily your heavenly Father will grant you what you need ; for in His love He is ever ready to listen to the prayers of His children."

THE UNFRIENDLY NEIGHBOUR.

75. HEALED ON THE SABBATH DAY

JESUS had said farewell to Galilee, and was on His way to the city of Jerusalem, visiting as He went many of the towns and villages that lay beyond Jordan.

In one of these villages there lived a woman who suffered a great deal. Nearly twenty years before, her back had begun to ache, and, as time went on, it grew weaker and more painful, until now she was bent almost double and could just hobble along on two sticks.

She could do very little for herself in the house, and many a time kind neighbours came and carried water for her from the well, while others gathered sticks for her fire and ground her corn to save her pushing round the heavy millstone.

Her face was drawn with pain, for she had suffered all these long weary years. She did not go out much, for she did not like people to look at her, and she felt in the way because she could move only very slowly. But no matter how painful her back was, there was one place to which that good woman always went, and that was to the synagogue on the Sabbath day. She had to leave home very early and toil slowly up the hill, but she was always in her place in the gallery, where the women sat. There she joined in the praises and the prayers, and very often did she pray that she might be released from her pain.

One Sabbath she was in her place as usual. That day a Stranger spoke—it was Jesus—and all the people listened with a growing wonder as He revealed to them the ways of God.

When He had finished, the woman felt His eyes fixed upon her. "Yes, come," He said, as he saw the question in her eyes. Very slowly and very shyly she hobbled from her place and made her way to Jesus.

There she stood before Him, so bent that she could not even see His face. But she felt a loving hand laid upon her, and a voice, full of tenderness and compassion, spoke, saying, "My daughter, you are healed of your infirmity."

Scarcely were the words spoken when the pain left her back, and she was able to stand upright; and there in the synagogue she and the whole congregation gave thanks and praise to God for all His goodness unto them.

HEALED ON THE SABBATH DAY.

76. THE PRODIGAL SON

THIS is a story which Jesus told to help the people to understand the love of God.

A certain man had two sons. The elder son was quiet and very serious; you would think he was almost afraid of laughter. But the younger son was gay and reckless, keen to enjoy all the pleasure that came his way. He had heard his friends speak of the gaiety of the great cities far away, and thither he longed to go.

"Father," he said one day, "give me, I pray you, the portion of the estate that will come to me, for I wish to go away and see other lands." Very sadly the father gave the younger son his share of the property, and not many days after, the lad rode away to seek the far country of his dreams. Soon he was caught up in all the gay life of the great cities. He spent his money lavishly, and while it lasted it brought him many friends.

At length a great famine arose in that far country, and the gay young man, having spent all his money, found himself in want. The "friends" his money had bought for him left him with a sneer, and at last he was glad to become a swineherd.

He realizes now how foolish he has been. The home that he had found so dull now seems very attractive. "I will arise and go to my father," he says, "and I will say to him, 'Father, I have done you a great wrong, and am no more worthy to be called your son. Make me as one of your hired servants.'"

Hungry, ragged, footsore, weary, utterly wretched, the boy draws near his home. Then his courage fails him; he is too ashamed to go any farther.

But now an aged figure comes running towards him—it is his father. Loving arms are thrown round the fainting boy, his confessions of wrong-doing are cut short. It is enough that he has come home.

"Bring the best robe and put it on him," the father cries to his servants, "and put a ring on his hand and shoes on his feet; for this, my son, was lost and is found. Kill the fatted calf, call my friends, and prepare a great feast. Bring musicians and let us make merry; for this, my son, was dead, and is alive again."

THE PRODIGAL SON.

77. THE TEN LEPERS

FROM a cave amongst the hills of Galilee there came one day the sound of husky voices raised in great excitement. It was a cave where lepers dwelt.

"I tell you it is the same Man," one leper was exclaiming. "I have heard of Him in many places. He does not only teach—He heals as well. Hundreds of people have received healing at His hands. The blind see, the deaf hear, and the lame walk."

"Aye, but are lepers cleansed?" one asked.

"I think so," came the answer. "It was whispered that a leper threw himself before this Healer, and that He touched him and made him whole."

"Touched him!" They all gasped in astonishment. "He must indeed have pity if He touched one of us."

"I tell you He is passing this way soon. Let us show ourselves to Him; He may have pity on us too."

Inspired by this great hope, the lepers made their way to the high ground overlooking the road that runs between Galilee and Samaria, along which Jesus and His disciples were expected soon to pass.

When at length they came in sight, the lepers cried as loudly as they could, "Jesus, Master, have mercy upon us!" Looking up, Jesus saw these poor wrecks of men, loathsome in their suffering, and His heart yearned for their healing. "Go," He cried, "and show yourselves to your priests."

They turned to go. They were still lepers. Perhaps their hopes were disappointed after all. But they had been told to go to the priests, so go they would. And as they went, lo! healing stole upon them. One part after another became strong and whole, and new, clean, healthy life surged through their bodies.

They stopped and looked upon one another. They were *all* clean, every one! Shouting for joy and leaping in their new-found strength, they hastened on their way, all except one, and he turned back to the highroad. Hurrying with all his might, he overtook Jesus and threw himself before Him, giving thanks and praise for the great renewal of his life.

"Did I not cure ten?" asked Jesus. "Where are the other nine? None have come back to give thanks to God, save this one—and he is a Samaritan." Then, stretching out His hand in blessing, Jesus said, "Arise, and go your way; your faith has made you whole indeed."

THE TEN LEPERS.

78. JESUS AND THE CHILDREN

IT happened one day that toward evening the Lord Jesus and His disciples drew near to a village in the region of Perea, which lies beyond the river Jordan. From the humble, hard-working folk that lived there they received a warm welcome, and into one of the little cottage homes the Lord Jesus entered as a guest.

When the children came in and saw the Stranger, they hovered shyly round the door at first; but gradually they drew nearer and nearer, until the youngest one crept up and slipped her hand into the hand of Jesus. Then she looked up into His face, and she knew at once that He was just a great big loving Friend. So they all clustered round Him until the time came for them to go to bed.

Next day the Lord Jesus gathered the people of the village round about Him, and spoke to them of the things of God. They listened eagerly, and asked Him many questions.

Meanwhile His little friends of the night before had been very busy. Round the village they had gone, telling all their little companions that they *must* come and see this great new Friend. " He is just wonderful," they told them, their faces radiant at the very thought of Him. " He knows how to listen, how to tease, how to give you fun, how to play, and how to tell a story. Come and find out for yourselves."

So the children gathered round, and the mothers came carrying their little babies, that they too might be blessed by this great Teacher. As they made their way eagerly to the Master, the disciples hurried forward to stop them. " Go away," they said; " the Master has no time for such little folks as you."

Disappointed, the little ones drew back. Tears were not far away. But just then Jesus looked round, and when He saw the children He smiled and held out His arms to welcome them, saying, " Suffer the little children to come unto Me."

Now they knew He wanted them, and so they clustered round Him one and all. What a happy time they had as He caressed and blessed each one! How easily they talked to Him, and how eagerly they listened to what He said to them, for they found in Him a boundless love that filled their hearts with joy.

JESUS AND THE CHILDREN.

79. THE GREAT REFUSAL

TOWARD evening Jesus left the village where the children had gathered round Him. The memories of the day were sweet and pleasant to Him, and He lingered over them.

Suddenly three riders came hastening along the road. Jesus and His disciples drew aside to let them pass, but as the foremost rider came near he leapt from his horse and came running to Jesus, throwing himself upon the ground before Him.

He was a young man, richly dressed. His horse was a fine one, gaily caparisoned ; the other two riders were his servants.

" Master," he cried, in great urgency, " you have the secret joy of life ; tell me what I must do to possess it also." As Jesus looked on this young man His heart was touched. He was young and eager, one who might prove fit for great service.

" You know the commandments," said Jesus. " Obey them."

" Which commandments ? " the young man questioned, hoping he would learn of something new.

" The commandments of Moses," answered Jesus. " Do not kill, do not steal, do not speak what is false, defraud no man, and honour your father and mother."

" Master," cried the young man, almost in despair, " with all my heart I have kept these commandments since I was a child. I am a ruler in the synagogue, and am held in honour by my fellows, yet I have not the joy that my heart craves. Tell me, I pray you, what I lack."

Life had been too easy for this young ruler, nothing had cost him any effort ; so now Jesus made a great demand, hoping he would be great enough to rise to it.

" There is another commandment," Jesus said. " You must love your neighbour as yourself."

" This also I have done," answered the young man.

" Think," said Jesus, " think again." And His eyes searched the face of the young man before Him. " Are there none around your doors that are in want ? With all your plenty, what have you given up or done without, that their needs might be satisfied ? "

The young man had no answer. " This you must do," said Jesus, " if you would know real joy. Sell all you have and give to those in want ; then come, stripped of all your wealth, and follow Me."

It was a hard demand, too hard for that young ruler ; he went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions.

THE GREAT REFUSAL.

80. A FOOLISH RICH MAN

IN the sunset hour, when the calm of evening had fallen, Jesus and His disciples entered into one of the villages beyond Jordan, and the people gathered round to hear what this famous Teacher had to say.

He spoke to them of the things of God. They listened, but Jesus knew that their minds were troubled with the worries and anxieties of every day. There were men before Him who worked for rich masters, yet had scarce enough to buy their daily bread. There were women too, careworn, with anxious thoughts as to how they could feed and clothe their children on the little money that came their way.

With eyes full of compassion Jesus looked upon these village folk, and then He told them a story.

" Once upon a time," said Jesus, " there lived a man who had wide and spacious lands. He was a hard master, working his servants to the very utmost. Year after year they gathered in his rich harvests, but never a word of praise or gratitude fell from his lips. He lived in ease and plenty, but cared not whether his servants had enough or not.

" One year his harvests were greater than usual. Before many fields were reaped his granaries were full, and much more was to come. In the great increase of his riches he did not stop to think either of the goodness of God, or of the toil of his servants, or of the poor who were in want. Instead, he gave orders that the old storehouses be pulled down and larger storehouses built ; and then, with great satisfaction, he watched how his wealth piled higher and higher until his great barns were full.

" ' Now,' he said to himself, ' I can take my ease, for I have plenty for many years to come. Life will now be all enjoyment.' But that night God required of that man his soul, and a poor starved soul it was, for he had lived for the things that perish, and these he could not give to God.

" Take warning, then," said Jesus, " not to be over-anxious for the things of this world ; for a man's life does not consist in the abundance of goods which he may possess, but in the measure of loving thoughts and kindly deeds which rejoice the heart of your Father in heaven."

A FOOLISH RICH MAN.

81. BLIND BARTIMÆUS

BARTIMÆUS was a blind man who lived in the city of Jericho. For many years now he had not been able to see; but his ears were so sharp that he could tell you almost everything that was happening on the roads by the side of which he sat and begged.

Bartimæus used to look forward to feast times, for then thousands of pilgrims passed through Jericho, and many of them threw coins to him as he sat begging by the wayside.

It was feast-time again, and the roads had been crowded even more than usual. Bartimæus had done well that day, but it was not until evening, when he wandered amongst the crowds in Jericho, that he heard that Jesus of Nazareth was in the city, and that was why there had been such great crowds.

Of a sudden these words came to Bartimæus, and his heart gave a great bound of hope: "It is the same Jesus who gave sight to a man in Jerusalem who was born blind."

Very early next morning Bartimæus went to the gate of Jericho that looks towards Jerusalem. He was determined that Jesus would not pass him by this time. Eagerly he listened, and at length he heard the sound of a great multitude approaching. Yes, Jesus was coming, he was told. Now was his chance.

The crowd drew nearer. His heart was pounding with excitement as he called out with all his might, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy upon me!" People tried to silence him, but instead he shouted the more, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy upon me!"

Then of a sudden the crowd stood still and the hum of voices was hushed. Friendly hands were laid on Bartimæus, and some one said, "Come, be of good cheer; the Master calleth you." Casting off his cloak, Bartimæus hurried forward and threw himself upon the ground.

"What would you like Me to do for you?" he heard in tones that thrilled him through and through.

"Lord," he cried with all his heart, "only that I might receive my sight."

Then gentle hands touched his poor, sightless eyes, and that voice spoke again, "Go your way; your faith has made you whole." The eyes of Bartimæus were opened; he looked round upon all the beauty of the world, and then into the face of Jesus so full of tenderness and love.

BLIND BARTIMÆUS.

82. ZACCHÆUS

IN the city of Jericho there lived a man who was called Zacchæus. He was a very little man, but he was very rich, and stayed in a big house full of the most beautiful and costly treasures.

But he was unhappy, for he was hated and despised by every one because he was a tax-gatherer in the pay of Rome.

Levi, of Capernaum, he heard, had given up tax-gathering to follow a Teacher called Jesus, and was so happy even in his poverty that Zacchæus wondered what great power this Teacher had.

Passover time came, and the roads were thronged with pilgrims making their way to the Temple at Jerusalem. Zacchæus was busy gathering in the tolls which every pilgrim had to pay.

Suddenly he heard the news—"Jesus of Nazareth is passing on His way to Jerusalem."

In a moment Zacchæus was out of his office and hurrying along the streets, which were already crowded with people. He was longing to see this Jesus who made friends even of tax-gatherers, but he was too small to see over the heads of all these people, and nobody would make room for him.

From the cheering of the crowds Zacchæus knew Jesus had arrived. Still he could not see. What was he to do? Just then he noticed a beautiful leafy sycamore tree with a fine strong branch not too far up. Thinking nothing of his dignity, Zacchæus gathered his robes about him and climbed up into that tree, that he might be able to see Jesus when He came.

Now He was drawing near. Eagerly Zacchæus looked upon that face. There he saw strength and power and love. No wonder Levi had given up all to follow a Leader such as this.

Right underneath the tree Jesus stood still, and the great procession stopped. Then Zacchæus heard his name. "Zacchæus," Jesus was saying, "make haste and come down, for I must stay in your house to-night." He could scarcely believe his ears—he who had not a friend in all the city had been singled out by Jesus to have Him as his Guest. It was too wonderful.

Still as in a dream Zacchæus led the way to his rich house, and that night he too gave up all his wealth, for he had found the greater treasure of having the Lord Jesus as his Friend.

ZACCHÆUS.

83. MARY AND THE ALABASTER BOX

FTEN when the Lord Jesus came to Jerusalem to attend a feast in the Holy Temple, He did not stay in the crowded city. He liked much better to slip away across the hills in the evening to the home of His friends, Martha and Mary and Lazarus, who lived in the quiet little village of Bethany.

But this time, as Mary looked forward to Jesus' coming, a great fear gripped her heart, for she had news from Jerusalem that the enemies of Jesus were plotting to put Him to death. At first it seemed impossible that death should come to Jesus, but gradually she came to see there could be no other way, for truth meant more to Him than life. At length He came, and Mary saw with pain and yet with pride with what an air of high resolve He carried the sorrow that weighed upon His heart.

Jesus had other friends in Bethany, amongst whom was Simon, who had been a leper. Very likely Simon had been cured by Jesus ; anyhow he was a wealthy man, living in a beautiful house in Bethany, and he resolved to give a feast for Jesus and His friends, chief amongst whom were, of course, Martha and Mary and Lazarus.

The feast was all prepared, and the guests had arrived and taken their places round the table. While Lazarus sat at meat with Jesus, Martha attended to the guests, but Mary just hovered near her Master, drawn to Him by her great love.

The feast went on happily. Nobody was paying any attention to Mary, nor did they notice that a new courage now lit those eyes that had for many days been dimmed by sadness.

Standing just behind Jesus, Mary took from the folds of her dress a beautiful vase of delicate alabaster. It was her greatest treasure. In a moment she had broken it, and poured the sweet perfume it contained over the head and the feet of her beloved Lord. Bending low, she wiped His feet with her long lovely hair. The hand of Jesus stretched forth in benediction, and from His touch Mary knew that He had understood all she could never say in words.

Some murmured at the waste and the extravagance of Mary's gift, but Jesus saw in it a beauty of love and sympathy and understanding which He had found nowhere else.

MARY AND THE ALABASTER BOX.

84. JESUS ENTERS JERUSALEM

HAVING arrived in Bethany, the Lord Jesus rested there over the Sabbath day. Many of the pilgrims who had come with Him from Jericho pitched their tents on the Mount of Olives, and waited there in the hope that they might go to Jerusalem also in His company on the first day of the week.

Very early in the morning they were ready, and all day they kept a careful watch, for they had heard how Jesus loved to slip away unseen. The heat of the day was already over when, at length, two disciples were sent forward by Jesus. They looked very mystified as they made their way to Bethphage, for they had been told that they would find a young ass tethered there, which they were to loose and bring to their Master.

On the brow of the hill—already in sight of Jerusalem—they met Jesus and the great crowd that came with Him. The eyes of the disciples were gleaming now, and they were greatly excited, for they had remembered the words of the prophet : " Behold thy King cometh unto thee, lowly, riding upon an ass." At last, then, they decided, their dreams were coming true. Jesus was going to ride into Jerusalem as King, and the hopes of all the ages would be fulfilled that day.

Scarcely able to contain themselves for joy, they threw their cloaks upon the ass's back, and then, as Jesus rode forward, they broke forth into glad shouts of praise.

" Hosanna ! Hosanna ! Hosanna to the Lord our King ! "

In a moment the crowd had taken up the cry, and they sang aloud, praising God for all the wonders He had done. Wild with joy, they ran to do honour to their King. Cutting down branches of palm trees, they lined the way along which He should pass. Cloaks were spread that He might ride over them, flowers and leaves were strewn in His path.

" Hosanna ! Hosanna ! Hosanna to the Son of David ! " sang the people. " Blessed be He that cometh in the name of the Lord."

So this joyous company made their way into the city of Jerusalem. Never was there such a scene of love and joy within these ancient walls—yet the heart of Jesus rejoiced most to hear the songs of the little children as they went before Him on His way.

JESUS ENTERS JERUSALEM.

85. "THIRSTY, AND YE GAVE ME TO DRINK"

THE enemies of the Lord Jesus were closing in round about Him, so now every precious moment must be used to teach His disciples, that they, at least, might understand His message.

"Listen," said Jesus to them one day, "and I will tell you of how men shall be judged. At the end of all things, the Son of Man shall sit upon His throne like a king, and all people shall be gathered together before Him. Some shall stand on His right hand, and some on His left, for He has judged them every one, and His judgment is unerring.

"Then to those on His right hand the King shall say, 'Come, you who have rejoiced the Father's heart, enter now into His kingdom, which is Love; for I was hungry and ye gave Me food, I was thirsty and ye gave Me to drink, I was a stranger and ye gave Me shelter in your homes, I was naked and ye clothed Me, I was sick and in prison and ye visited Me.'

"Then shall all those who have been so welcomed by the King murmur one to another, saying, 'Know you aught of these deeds of which He speaks?' —'Nay,' shall say one, 'I fed many a beggar at my door, and to those who were in want I gave all I could spare, but never did I feed the hungry Son of Man.'—'In the heat of the day,' shall say another, 'I drew water from the well, and gave to thirsty travellers to refresh them on their way, and at evening, when they needed rest, my house was open to them, but never did I give water or shelter to the weary Son of Man.'

"'Lord,' they shall then say, 'when saw we Thee hungry and fed Thee, or thirsty and gave Thee to drink? When did we see Thee a stranger and gave Thee shelter, or sick or in prison and came unto Thee?'

"Then shall the King answer, 'Inasmuch as ye have shown kindness unto one, even the least of these My brethren and your brethren who needed help, ye have shown that kindness unto Me.'

"Then to those on the left hand the King shall say, 'Depart from Me, for you have not helped those that were in need; and inasmuch as ye did it not unto one of the least of these, ye did it not to Me.'"

"THIRSTY, AND YE GAVE ME TO DRINK."

86. JESUS WASHING THE DISCIPLES' FEET

THE days of the Passover week were speeding on, and now the time had come for the preparation of the feast. Calling Peter and John, the Lord Jesus told them to go to Jerusalem, there to prepare the Passover. A secret sign and a password only He gave them, and sent them on their way. The face of Judas darkened as he heard these directions, which he could not understand.

Following their mysterious instructions, Peter and John met a man in Jerusalem, who took them to a large upper room, where they were joined later by Jesus and the other disciples.

On the way Jesus had been silent, for He had much to think about ; but the disciples had not noticed this, for they were busy disputing amongst themselves. Knowing they were going to a feast, first one and then another had begun to claim the seat of honour, which he thought was his due. Claims of greatness were advanced by all, until feelings were hurt and tempers roused, and so, as they filed into that upper room, they spoiled its beauty by their angry selfish thoughts.

Jesus was disappointed, but He said nothing. Silently, with jealousy still burning in their hearts, the disciples took their places at the table. Jesus waited for a little, then He arose and, throwing off His cloak, went over to a corner by the door where stood a water-jar and a basin. It was the duty of a slave to wash the feet of guests as they arrived, but this little company had no slave to wait upon them.

Girding Himself with a towel, therefore, the Lord Jesus poured out water, and kneeling down before each of His disciples, He washed and cooled their tired, dusty feet. Shame held them dumb. They had been so concerned about their greatness that they had left the meanest task of all to their Master and their Lord.

When He had finished, Jesus returned to His seat, and then He spoke. " Ye call Me Master and Lord," He said, " and so I am. If I then, your Master, have washed your feet, ye ought also to wash one another's feet. For he who would be greatest amongst you, let him be as a servant. I have given you an example that ye may follow it, and show all men that ye are My disciples."

JESUS WASHING THE DISCIPLES' FEET.

87. THE LAST SUPPER

IN the quiet of the upper room Jesus and His disciples waited to begin the feast of the Passover. As soon as three stars appeared in the sky, silver trumpets were sounded from the Temple towers, giving the signal for the celebration of the feast.

There was something solemn about this feast, which stretched back in a long chain of memory across the ages to that night of deliverance from bondage in Egypt; but there was joy in the feast as well, for it spoke of the constant love and tenderness of God.

This night the feast went on as usual; then a great wave of sorrow seemed to break over the Lord Jesus. Moved as they had never seen Him moved before, He spoke to His disciples, saying, " I have greatly desired to eat this feast with you, My friends, for you have stood by Me in My temptations. Yet," he added, in deep agony, " My soul is troubled, for one of you shall betray Me."

Betrayal and treachery were ugly thoughts, yet the disciples knew how weak they were, and how easily they might fall into some terrible mistake. " Lord, is it I ? Lord, is it I ? " sounded from each one in turn round the table.

" The Son of Man must suffer," then said Jesus; " but woe unto him by whom He is betrayed." A shuddering silence fell on all, then Judas rose and left the room, his footsteps echoing through the silence of the night.

After that Jesus became more calm again, and spoke many words of love and warning to His disciples. Then, taking the bread that was on the table, He broke it, and, after He had given thanks, He passed it to each one. " This is My body," He said, " broken for you. This do in remembrance of Me." In the same manner also He took the cup, saying, " This is the new covenant in My blood, which is shed for you; drink ye all of it."

In awed silence the disciples ate and drank. A new covenant had been made indeed—the covenant of Love, bringing power and strength, demanding suffering and sacrifice, yet leading to eternal victory.

Down through the ages the command of Jesus has been obeyed—This do in remembrance of Me—and there at His table He is ever present to welcome all who would follow in His steps.

THE LAST SUPPER.

88. THE BETRAYAL

AFTER supper was ended, Jesus and His disciples still lingered in the upper room, for their moments together now were very precious. At length they arose and sang a hymn together; then they went forth into the cool stillness of the night.

Silently, with a feeling of coming disaster, the disciples followed Jesus to the eastern gate of the city, then down into the valley, across the brook Cedron, and up the other side, until they came to an old walled garden—the Garden of Gethsemane. There Jesus entered; it was one of His favourite haunts.

The moon was shining, turning the olive trees all to silver, and casting their shadows on the ground. All the way from Jerusalem a skulking figure had followed the little company. Now that he saw where they had gone, he fled back to Jerusalem, never halting till he reached the Temple courts, and made his way into the presence of the high priest.

Meanwhile, in the garden, Jesus fought out alone the struggle between purity and goodness and the powers of wickedness and sin. In deep agony of soul He came again and again to His disciples for sympathy if not for help; but they were heavy with sleep, and did not understand at all the anguish of their Master's soul.

At length Jesus roused them from their sleep. "Arise," He said, "and let us go: for he that betrayeth Me is at hand."

Still dazed, the disciples rose and looked about them. Surely these were lights approaching over the brow of the hill; yes, there were torches, and lanterns held high to show the way, and now and then the glint of metal. Why were soldiers out at such an hour, they wondered, and what business had they here?

The tramp of feet came nearer, and the stream of lights turned in to that quiet garden. Then the disciples saw the soldiers of the Temple guard, and Roman soldiers too, headed by Judas, who came forward to greet his Master with a kiss. This was the signal that had been agreed upon, and in a moment soldiers stepped forward and laid hands on Jesus, while the rabble that followed at their heels beheld in wonder the calm dignity of the prisoner.

Then, as the soldiers closed in round their Master, fear fell upon the eleven disciples, and they fled in panic, leaving a dreadful stillness in the garden.

THE BETRAYAL.

89. PETER DENIES HIS MASTER

FROM the Garden of Gethsemane, where they had arrested Jesus, the soldiers returned to Jerusalem, making their way up through the echoing streets until they reached the palace of the high priest.

Meanwhile Peter and John, having recovered from their panic, had followed their Master afar off, and they too came to the palace of the high priest. John was well known there, so he and Peter were allowed to enter.

As Peter passed through the gateway, the maid on duty looked at him keenly. She was sure she had seen him before, but where she did not know. In the courtyard Peter joined a group of soldiers and servants who had gathered round the fire, for the night air was chill. They talked and laughed together, but Peter sat staring into the fire, lost in thought. Meanwhile the maid at the gate had been looking hard at him, then she crossed the courtyard and spoke. " You are one of that Man's disciples, are you not ? " she said. Roused and startled, Peter answered roughly, " Woman, I do not know what you mean."

The loudness of Peter's denial attracted the attention of others, who peered at him as he tried to withdraw into the shadows beyond the flicker of the flames. " Indeed you must be one of them," they said ; " your speech tells that you come from Galilee." Thoroughly frightened now, Peter again shouted his denial, this time declaring with an oath, " I tell you I know not the Man."

Just then a soldier joined the group—one of the Temple guard. " Methinks I saw you in the garden," he said. " If I mistake not, it was you who cut off the ear of my kinsman Malchus."

Again Peter protested in violent language that he knew naught of the Man of whom they spoke. At that very moment, while the denial was still upon his lips, Peter heard the cock crow, and his heart turned to lead within him as he remembered his Master's words : " Peter, before the cock crow, you will deny Me thrice."

Just then Jesus was led through the courtyard, and as Peter looked up he met the eyes of his Master. There was pain and suffering in that look, and yet a gentleness that stabbed Peter like a sword. Blinded by tears of shame and sorrow, he staggered out into the night weeping bitterly.

PETER DENIES HIS MASTER.

90. JESUS BEFORE PILATE

EARLY in the morning, Caiaphas the high priest, followed by a great crowd of people, made his way to the palace of Pilate, that the Roman governor might pass sentence of death upon Jesus.

The crowd fell silent when Pilate appeared. The judgment seat was brought out, and then proceedings began. "Let the Prisoner be brought forward," commanded Pilate. Still bound, Jesus was placed between His accusers and His judge. There He stood, calm, dignified, unafraid, heeding neither the fury of the crowd nor the power of His judge.

"What accusation do ye bring against this Man?" asked Pilate. In answer, confusion broke loose amongst the crowd—a hundred accusations being hurled against the Prisoner. Disdainfully Pilate waited, then commanded silence. "Your accusation?" he repeated, and this time Caiaphas made answer, "He is guilty of blasphemy, but He is guilty also of disloyalty to Rome. He has misled the people, and claims to be a king."

Summoning Jesus into the judgment hall, Pilate spoke with Him in private. "Are you a king?" he asked.—"I came to found a Kingdom," answered Jesus, "but My Kingdom is not of this world, for it is the Kingdom of Truth."

Again Pilate faced the crowd. "I find no fault in this Man," he said. "I will scourge Him and set Him free."

Like a pack of wild beasts, afraid they were to be cheated of their prey, the crowd shrieked out, "Away with this Man! Away with this Man!"

Jesus was sent to be scourged, and returned pale and worn. The soldiers had decked him in a royal robe, and placed a crown of thorns upon His head in mockery of His claim to be a king.

"Behold your King," cried Pilate, hoping to arouse the pity of the crowd. "What shall I do with your King?" Quick as a flash came back the answer, "Crucify Him! Crucify Him!"

"Shall I crucify your *King*?" cried Pilate.

"We have no king but Cæsar," came the answer. Then sounded one voice, full of menace, "If you spare this Man, you are not Cæsar's friend."

Fear leapt into Pilate's eyes. He could not afford to lose favour with Cæsar, even at the cost of truth and justice and right. "I am innocent of the blood of this just Man," was his last feeble protest, and with these words he handed over Jesus to the will of His enemies.

JESUS BEFORE PILATE.

91. JESUS ON THE CROSS

IT was still early morning when the procession set out from the palace of Pilate to go to the place of execution. There were three prisoners, Jesus, and two robbers, who had also been condemned to death. A great rabble followed as they carried their crosses through the streets, beyond the city wall to that grim place known as Golgotha. All the way the crowd kept shouting, " Away with Him ! Crucify Him ! Crucify Him ! "

At length the place was reached, and the cross of Jesus was placed between those of the two robbers. His enemies had done their worst, yet even now, upon the cross, Jesus breathed the prayer, " Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."

Gathering round the foot of the cross, where Jesus hung in agony, the scribes and Pharisees mocked and jeered at Him. " You claim to be a king," one shouted ; " let us see if you can come down from that cross."—" He saved others," another mocked, " but Himself He cannot save."

The weary hours dragged on. Many of the friends of Jesus were gathered there, looking on heart-broken at this terrible scene.

Of the two robbers that hung side by side with Jesus, one railed and cursed, calling upon Jesus to free them and Himself ; but the other turned to Jesus, saying, " Lord, remember me when Thou comest into Thy kingdom." The answer of Jesus came, bringing strength and comfort to that man's heart, " To-day thou shalt be with Me in Paradise."

Towards midday the sky grew dark. A strong wind swept the hilltop, and the earth seemed to tremble. Fear fell on all, and driven by a nameless dread many left that awful scene.

Near the foot of the cross stood Mary, the mother of Jesus, and John, the disciple, was with her. " Mother," said Jesus faintly, for His strength was nearly gone, " behold your son.—John," He said to His disciple, " take care of her as if she were your mother."

Then Jesus cried with a loud voice, " It is finished ! " And while the air still rang with His shout of victory, He died.

As the sun was setting, some of Jesus' friends took that beloved body and carried it into a beautiful garden, where they laid it very tenderly in a new rock-hewn tomb, and then closed the entrance with a great stone door.

JESUS ON THE CROSS.

92. "HE IS RISEN"

THE sun was setting as the friends of the Lord Jesus left the tomb that held His sacred body and made their way back to Jerusalem, dumb with sorrow and pain.

The Passover Sabbath had now commenced, but the disciples of Jesus took no interest in what was going on in the Temple. Bewildered and dismayed at the tragedy that had happened in a few short hours, they sat behind closed doors.

Everything had ended in disaster. They had given up all and followed Jesus, believing that He held the secret force of life, and now He was dead. They had expected Him to found a kingdom, and He had been put to death like a criminal. It had been splendid to know Him and to see truth through His eyes, but He was only a memory now. Their hopes were shattered.

The past brought them pain as well as joy, for they all knew how they had forsaken their Master in His hour of need; the present was full of danger and of fear, and the future was black with despair.

Hour after hour passed, but within that upper room—for there they had taken refuge in their fear and their dismay—no one marked the passing of the hours; none knew whether it were night or day.

Suddenly the door was forced open, and some of the women friends of Jesus burst excitedly into the room. It seemed a strange story that they told. "Early this morning, as soon as the Sabbath was over, we went to the garden with spices to embalm the Lord's body," they said. "On the way we wondered how we should remove the stone; but when we arrived we found it already rolled away, and the body of the Lord Jesus was not there. As we stood perplexed, behold two men appeared in shining raiment. We were afraid and bowed before them to the ground. 'Ye seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified; but why seek ye the living amongst the dead?' they asked of us. 'Behold the Lord is not here. He is risen, even as He said.'

"We know not what the message means," the women said; "but certain it is the Lord said He would rise again on the third day. It may be He is alive again."

But as the disciples listened, the women's words seemed as idle tales, and they believed them not.

"HE IS RISEN."

93. THE LORD APPEARS TO MARY

IN the grey light of early dawn the garden lay all silent, as Mary of Magdala came hurrying to the tomb where Jesus had been laid. She had brought sweet spices to anoint the body of her Lord. Seeing the stone had been rolled away, Mary entered the tomb and looked round; then a cry of despair broke from her, for she saw the tomb was empty. Terrible thoughts came crowding into her mind. Had the priests come and stolen the body, she wondered, or had the Romans ordered it to be thrown beside the bodies of criminals? What rude, unloving hands had dared to touch the body of her Lord?

Worn out with fear and grief, Mary leant against the wall of the tomb. Wave after wave of sorrow broke over her as she stood there weeping out all the hopelessness and misery of her broken heart.

After a while she became aware of a light shining within the tomb. Looking in, she saw two shining figures, one sitting at the head and the other at the feet, where the body of Jesus had lain. In kindly tones they spoke to her. "Woman," they said, "why do you weep?"

"Because they have taken away my Lord," she sobbed, "and I know not where they have laid Him."

Mary turned away, and then, through the mist of her tears, she saw some one approach. He also spoke kindly to her. "Woman," He said, "why do you weep? Whom are you seeking?"

Supposing Him to be the gardener, Mary answered, "Sir, if you have borne Him forth, tell me where you have laid Him, and I will take away His body."

The Stranger spoke one word—"Mary." There was only one voice in all the world could speak her name like that. "Master," she cried, as she flung herself at His feet and worshipped Him. "Touch Me not," said Jesus, "but go and tell the others that I am risen from the dead."

As Mary looked up, gazing in adoration on the face of her beloved Lord, He seemed to disappear into the light of the morning sun. Mary saw Him no more, but, with joy glowing in her heart, she fled to Jerusalem and there declared her glad tidings: "The Lord is risen; He is risen indeed. I have seen Him, and He has spoken to me. He is alive—alive for evermore!"

THE LORD APPEARS TO MARY.

94. EVENING AT EMMAUS

TOWARD evening, on that first Easter Day, two friends of the Lord Jesus were making their way from Jerusalem to their home in the village of Emmaus, about seven miles distant.

They were talking sadly together, for they were thinking about Jesus. They had believed that He was the Messiah, the Deliverer promised from of old, but His death had shattered all their hopes. They had heard that He had risen from the dead, but they could not believe the news.

While they talked together a Stranger joined them on their way. " What matters are these that fill your minds ? " He asked. " They seem to make you sad."

" Sir," they exclaimed, " surely you must be a stranger to these parts if you know not of the terrible things that have been happening these days."— " What things ? " asked the Stranger.

In answer, the pilgrims told Him of their Lord's death, of their disappointed hopes, and of the strange story told by the women who had gone early to the tomb.

The Stranger listened carefully while they spoke, and then, with a tender smile in His eyes, He began to ease the burden that lay upon their hearts. " Surely," He said, " ye have been slow of heart to understand the writings of the prophets, or ye would have expected just such things to happen." Then, beginning with the Book of the Law, and going on to the Prophets, He explained to these two pilgrims all that had been foretold concerning the Messiah. They listened eagerly. Much as they had studied the Scriptures, they had never understood them as now they did, when they saw them lit up, as it were, by this Master Mind.

Now they drew near to Emmaus. The Stranger would have gone on farther, but when the pilgrims arrived at their house they begged of Him to enter, for it was toward evening. Graciously He accepted their invitation ; and then, as He broke the bread and blessed it at their table, they recognized in this Stranger the Lord Jesus Himself.

As they gazed upon Him in rapture and amazement, He vanished from their sight. But they did not need to see Him any more. They knew now He was alive. Their hopes were not deceived, but gloriously fulfilled, so they sped back to Jerusalem to rejoice the hearts of the friends of Jesus with their great glad news.

EVENING AT EMMAUS.

95. PETER AND JOHN AT THE GATE BEAUTIFUL

IT was the hour of prayer one day in Jerusalem, and a great many people were making their way up the hill to the Holy Temple, there to worship God. Amongst those who came were Peter and John. There was something so strong, so joyous, so radiant about these two men, that people turned to look at them as they passed on their way.

Near the Beautiful Gate of the Temple lay a man who had been a cripple all his days. He liked to be carried to the Temple gate at the hour of prayer, for that was a good time to ask for alms. He had begged now for so many years that he could tell from the faces of the folks who came whether they would be kind to him or not.

On this day he saw Peter and John coming up the hill. There was no doubt about their joy and happiness; he was sure they would give him something; so, as they came forward, he called out for alms.

Peter and John stopped. "Look on us," said Peter, fixing his eyes upon the man. The lame man looked up, wondering how much he might receive. Then Peter spoke again. "Silver and gold have I none," he said, "but what I have I will give to you. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk."

Something in Peter's tone compelled the man's obedience. He did not stop to think how impossible it was, but, taking hold of Peter's hand, he raised himself up and stood upon his feet. It felt strange at first, but gradually strength came. He found he was able to stand! Then in his joy he took a leap forward. Radiant with happiness, he seized hold of Peter and John, and ran forward leaping and praising God with all his might.

People gathered together in astonishment, asking how this miracle had taken place. Then Peter spoke in answer to the many questions that were being asked. "Why marvel ye at this?" he said. "And why look ye so earnestly on us? It is not by our own power that we have healed this man, but by the power of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Prince of Life. We are His witnesses, and we call you now to be His followers, that you also may know the joy of His presence."

PETER AND JOHN AT THE GATE BEAUTIFUL.

96. THE BOLDNESS OF PETER AND JOHN

VERLOOKING the Temple stood the fortress of Antonia. From its walls and towers a sharp look-out was kept on all that happened on the open courts below. The commotion following the healing of the lame man was reported, and soon a number of the priests, together with the Temple guard, came breaking in upon the excited crowd. They laid hold of Peter and John, who seemed to have caused the disturbance, and thrust them into prison.

Next day they were brought before the court for trial. It was the very court that had condemned to death their Master. Only a few weeks ago any one of the disciples would have been terror-stricken at the very thought of appearing in the presence of such enemies, but now Peter and John stand before them calm and fearless.

" It is said that yesterday, in the courts of the Temple, you cured a cripple of his lameness," said Caiaphas the high priest. " By what power, or in whose name, have you done this deed ? "

Then Peter stood forth and answered bravely, " Ye elders of Israel, be it known unto you all, and unto all the people of Israel, that it is by the power of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, but whom God raised from the dead—it is by His power, and no other, that this man stands before you whole."

Now these priests and rulers knew that Peter and John were plain, unlearned men, so when they saw the dignity with which they bore themselves, and the boldness with which they spoke, they were amazed ; for here was the very spirit which they had met in Jesus Christ their Master.

" What shall we do with these men ? " they questioned together. " That a very notable miracle has happened is well known throughout Jerusalem. We cannot deny it, but we must prohibit any further mention of this name, and soon the people will forget."

Summoning Peter and John, therefore, they commanded them neither to speak nor to teach in the NAME of Jesus any more. But the disciples answered boldly, " Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you rather than to obey Him, you will be able to judge ; but we are determined to tell the things that we have seen and heard, for we are witnesses unto the life and death and resurrection of Jesus Christ our Lord."

THE BOLDNESS OF PETER AND JOHN.

97. PETER DELIVERED FROM PRISON

THE king who ruled in Jerusalem at this time was Herod, a grandson of Herod the Great. He was a wicked and cruel man, ready to sacrifice anything or anybody to satisfy his desires.

He had discovered that he could win the favour of the priests by persecuting the followers of Christ ; so he put to death first one and then another, just to hear the praises of the people ringing in his ears.

Already James has been killed, and now, during the feast of the Passover, Peter was seized and thrust into prison. In a few days he too would be delivered to the mob.

Knowing very well the fate that was in store for him, Peter lay in his dark dungeon, chained to two soldiers, while two others mounted guard outside the door. Every three hours his guards were changed, for he was a very important prisoner in Herod's eyes.

These were awful days for Peter. A few years ago he would have stormed and raged at such treatment, but now he was calm and strong, willing to suffer anything for his Master's sake, quite sure that even in prison God was watching over him.

Peter's last night had come ; the next day had been fixed for his execution —yet he slept calmly through the hours of darkness. Suddenly a bright light shone upon him, waking him out of his sleep. He was so dazzled that he could scarcely see ; but he found that the chains had slipped from off his hands, and he heard a voice commanding him to arise, put on his sandals, take his cloak, and follow whither he was led.

Still in a kind of dream, Peter obeyed. When he came to himself he was alone, standing in one of the streets of the city. " Surely," he said to himself, " the angel of the Lord has delivered me out of prison and out of the hands of Herod."

With all speed he made his way to the house of the upper room, for there he knew he would find friends. It was the middle of the night when Peter entered that upper room—so sacred in the minds of all. His friends were there, every one of them, for they had spent that whole night praying for his release ; and here he was restored to them, spared to do further service for his Lord.

PETER DELIVERED FROM PRISON.

98. PAUL'S ESCAPE FROM DAMASCUS

FEAR reigned in many hearts in the city of Damascus, for news had come that Saul the Persecutor, afterwards known as Paul, was on his way with letters from the high priest in Jerusalem, giving him authority to seize, bind, and imprison any who believed in the Lord Jesus Christ. Already they had heard of Paul's fierce persecution in Jerusalem, and they feared that there would be little hope of escape from his hands.

At length he arrived, but his coming was very different from what the people of Damascus had expected. Paul entered the city very meekly, led by two of his company, for he had been stricken with blindness. For the moment, then, there was no fear of persecution ; but how long they would be safe from the fury of Paul the followers of Jesus did not know.

After three days Paul came forth, for his blindness had passed away. He went straight to the synagogue, where a great crowd of Pharisees had gathered to meet him who had come to be their leader.

Paul stood up to speak. Knowing his great zeal against the Christians, his friends looked on him with approval. Think then of their amazement when he declared himself a persecutor no longer, but a servant and follower of the Lord Jesus. On the way to Damascus, he said, the risen Lord had appeared to him, and he had heard and answered His call.

Amazement turned to fury as they listened to his words. Those who had been Paul's friends now became his deadly enemies, and they determined that this turn-coat must die.

Every gate of the city was guarded. Day and night a grim watch was kept. Each of the guards carried a knife concealed within his cloak, which he longed to plunge into the heart of Paul.

Late one night, under cover of the darkness, hooded figures stole into a house which stood upon the wall of the city. All lights were put out, then cautiously a window was opened. Not a sound was to be heard—it seemed the way was clear. Soon a dark mass appeared against the wall; little by little it jerked down to the ground ; a signal was given, and up it went again, this time more quickly. It was lighter now, for already Paul, who had been lowered in that basket, was speeding on his way across the plain.

PAUL'S ESCAPE FROM DAMASCUS.

99. PAUL AND SILAS IN PRISON

THE sun was blazing down upon the market-place in the city of Philippi in Greece. The magistrates were seated on their marble chairs, ready to dispense justice, when all of a sudden a violent, screaming mob came pouring into the open square, dragging two prisoners with them. These were none other than Paul and Silas, who had come to tell the people about Jesus Christ. The whole crowd were shouting out accusations against them. Nothing could be made of this babel of sound, but it was obvious that the people were angry with these Jews ; so the command was given, " Strip them, and have them flogged."

Very deliberately the soldiers strode forward to lash the backs of Paul and Silas, who had been tied to whipping-posts. When the scourging was over, the prisoners were marched down to the great prison. The jailer was cautioned to make them fast, " for these are the men who were to show us the way of salvation," jeered the soldiers.

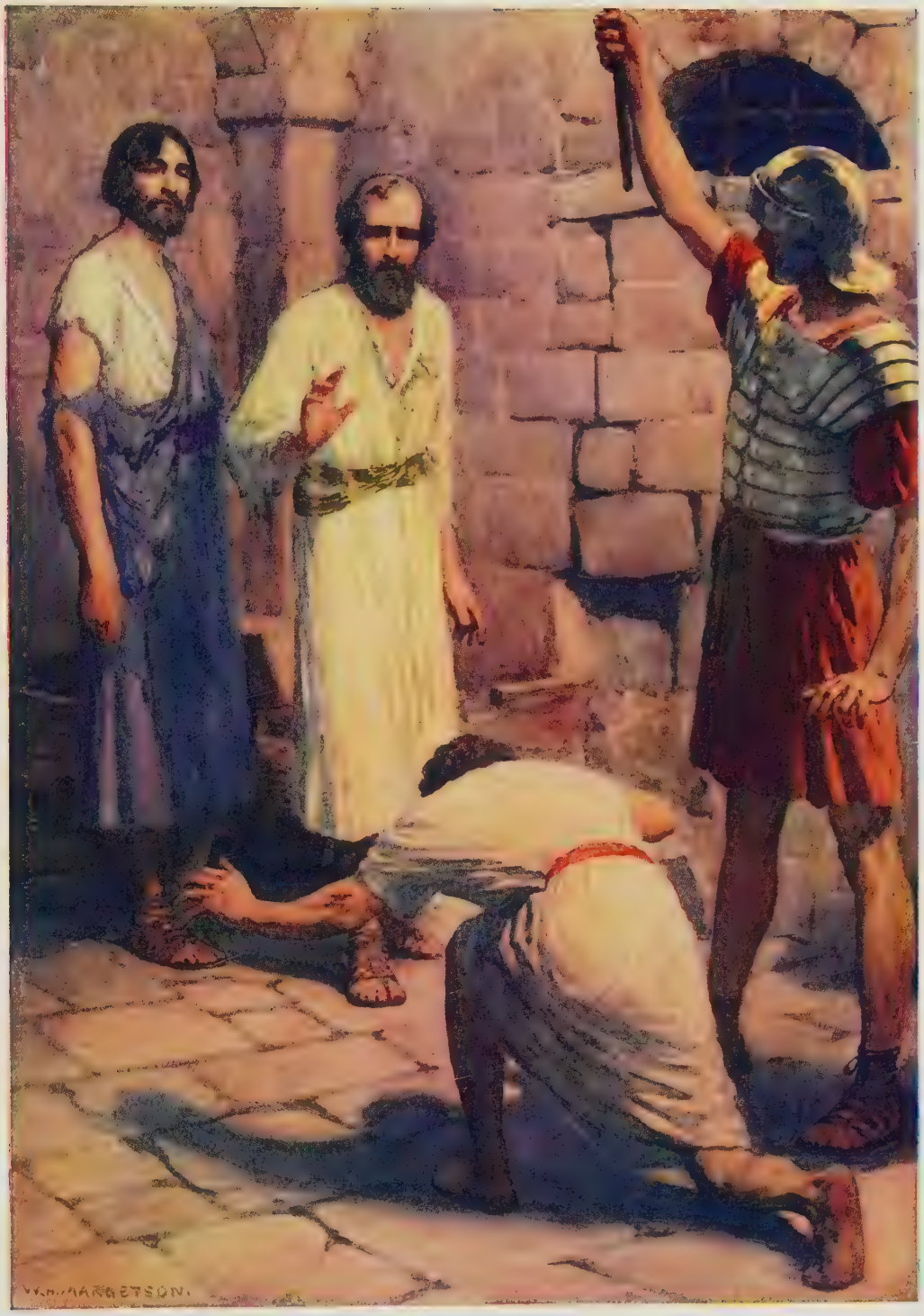
Down into the darkest innermost dungeon they were led. Great chains fastened to the wall were clamped upon their arms, and their feet were made fast in the stocks.

There they were left in their pain and misery. But even there they felt their Master very near, for He too had suffered scourging at the hand of Rome ; so they lifted up their hearts in prayer, and, as they prayed, all their suffering was turned into gladness, and they broke forth into psalms and hymns of praise. Never before had such a sound been heard in that Philippian prison.

Suddenly, however, there came a rumble. It grew louder and louder; then the earth shook, the great stones of the wall were forced apart, and the staples fell to earth with a clatter; the posts of the door swayed, and then the door came crashing to the floor.

Calling for torches, the jailer came rushing to the scene. He was greatly afraid, for the earthquake meant to him the anger of God, and he had heard that these men were the servants of the Most High God ; so, kneeling before Paul and Silas, he cried out, " Sirs, what must I do to be saved ? "

Then Paul and Silas told him and all his household of the love and power of Jesus Christ their Lord, and they all believed, rejoicing in this new-found truth.



PAUL AND SILAS IN PRISON.

100. PAUL'S VOYAGE TO ROME

AN Egyptian corn-ship, bound for Rome, was lying in the port of Myra, when she was boarded by a Roman centurion in charge of Paul and a number of other prisoners who were to be taken to Rome. It was already late in the year, a time when sailors knew the storms of the Mediterranean to be dangerous. When they came to Fair Havens, in the island of Crete, Paul advised the captain to spend the winter safely in the harbour there ; but he paid no attention, and once more they set sail.

All of a sudden fierce gales smote the ship, tossing her to and fro in the billows, wrenching at her sails, and pulling at her mast. The clouds whirled dark overhead, the waves rose higher and higher and swooped down in all their fury upon the ship. Quickly the sails were taken in, but it was impossible to steer the ship ; the captain simply let her drift, and like a riderless horse she plunged on over the mountains and valleys of the sea.

Wrenched by the gale, the ship's timbers shivered and started. Binding and girding her with ropes, they staggered on, while waves broke with a crash and swept the deck from end to end. Gear and tackle and cargo were thrown overboard ; but still the storm raged without ceasing, until they were about to give up in despair.

Then, in the darkest hour, Paul stepped forth to give them comfort and hope. " Be of good cheer," he said, " for there shall be no loss of life, although the ship will be wrecked. To-night the angel of the Lord stood by me, saying, ' Fear not, Paul, for you will appear before Cæsar, and God has put into your hands all who are sailing with you on the ship.' Wherefore, be of good cheer, for it shall be as God has told me.

" For many days we have fasted," continued Paul ; " take some food now, for your health's sake, I pray you." Then, taking bread, Paul broke it, and having given thanks to God, he began to eat, and so did they all, and found strength and courage coming back to them again.

Soon afterwards the ship drove ashore on an island. Beaten by the violence of the waves she went to pieces, but every one on board arrived safely on land, as Paul had said.

Printed in Great Britain at the Press of the Publishers
Thomas Nelson and Sons Ltd, Edinburgh

PAUL'S VOYAGE TO ROME.

BIBLE BOOKS FOR BOYS AND GIRLS

NELSON'S SHORTER ATLAS OF THE BIBLE — by L. H. Grollenberg O.P.

Nelson's ATLAS OF THE BIBLE is to be found in practically every library of standing, for, as pointed out in *The Times Literary Supplement*, ' it is absolutely indispensable to any intelligent study of the Bible '.

Its success has encouraged the author to prepare a new and concise version in a size and at a price which brings it within the reach of most homes.

The method so successful in the ATLAS OF THE BIBLE, of combining plates, text and maps into one integrated whole, has also been used in the SHORTER ATLAS OF THE BIBLE. The first part describes the geographical setting and gives a brief but illuminating account of the techniques of archaeological investigation, and the remaining chapters deal with the Bible itself, describing what we know of its history and composition and also telling us something of the actual history of the Biblical peoples themselves.

The superb plates form a valuable and spectacular part of the book. They have been chosen with skill and imagination to illustrate the lands of the Bible and to show how the people of the Bible lived and worked.

200 *plates* 10 *maps in full colour*

KING OF KINGS — by Malcolm Saville

In KING OF KINGS Malcolm Saville re-tells the greatest story in the world—the immortal story of the birth, life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. It is told simply, with the dignity it merits and with the needs of present-day young people especially in mind. KING OF KINGS is written vividly and without sentimentality. Mr Saville has not shirked the controversial aspects of the Gospel story which, as he says, ' is certainly a dramatic record of events which have proved to be based on facts that are historically true. Although only a fragment of the sayings of Jesus have come down to us, what words we have are still enough to change the world if only we would accept them.'

' A new re-telling of the life of Christ is Malcolm Saville's *King of Kings*. The book is beautifully printed, and is illustrated by admirable photographs of the Holy Land, two coloured plates of pictures by Titian and Vermeer and has four maps.'—*The Times Literary Supplement*

2 *colour plates* 22 *half-tones* 4 *maps* 278 *pages*

BIBLE READINGS FOR BOYS AND GIRLS

Passages from the Revised Standard Version of the Holy Bible, chosen from the Old and New Testaments by members of the Committee on Children's Work of the National Council of Churches.

This is not a book of Bible stories told in simple language, but a selection from the Bible itself. It is designed to introduce boys and girls to the Bible and will help them, as well as their elders, to read the Scriptures with greater understanding and increased enjoyment.

17 *colour plates and more than* 100 *other illustrations* *Large clear type* 256 *pages*

OUR CHRISTMAS STORY — by Mrs Billy Graham — *with a foreword by Billy Graham*

This is the story of Christmas as Mrs Billy Graham tells it in her own home to her own children. Now she tells it again for children everywhere—the story of God's preparation for His Christmas gift to the world : the birth of His Son.

When did Christmas really begin ? asks Mrs Graham. Not in Bethlehem two thousand years ago, but in the Garden of Eden with the first sin that separated all of His Children from God. Without an understanding of this, Mrs Graham explains, the birth of Our Lord has no meaning.

In moving but simple language, she shows how the birth of Christ is only part of the whole wonderful story. And in so doing, she gives Christmas a new and joyful meaning that will stir grown-ups who read it as much as it inspires the children who are listening.

Illustrated in colour by Aldren Watson 80 *pages*